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A short histgory of the Free
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A SHORT HISTORY
OF
THE FREE CHURCHES

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A SHORT HISTORY
OF
THE FREE CHURCHES

BY THE
REV. J. A. HOULDER

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PREFACE

THIS little book is but a “ Short History of the Free Churches,” and makes no pretensions to completeness. It has been prepared principally for the use of young people connected with Nonconformity, who have few opportunities of perusing larger works on the subject, in the hope that it may confirm them in their attachment to Free Church Principles, and lead them to value more highly the Religious Privileges which their spiritual forefathers have won for them at so great a cost. Moreover, as a considerable amount of care has been taken in setting forth briefly the outlines of the story, preparing the Chronological Table, verifying dates, and making a fairly full index, the author, who has had the valuable assistance of the Rev. T. G. Crippen, Librarian of the Congregational Library, trusts that what he has written may prove useful to ministers and others, as a first book of reference to the main facts of Free Church History.

J. A. H.

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CHAPTER I
FROM DARKNESS TO DAWNING
AN IMPERFECT REFORMATION

1366-1553

1. **Freedom and Independence of the Primitive Church.**—There is no doubt that the Churches of Christ in Apostolic times, and for a considerable period afterwards, were what is termed *Free*. They were independent of the State; and they recognised no supreme authority in doctrine and discipline but our Lord Himself and the word He left to be their rule of faith and practice. This was necessarily so. The rulers of the world either ignored or persecuted the followers of the latest Jewish prophet; and there was as yet no apostle or successor of the apostles, who exercised or claimed the sole right to govern them. Individual Christians, separate Churches, and Churches associated together for the purposes of pastoral oversight, enjoyed religious liberty. They acted only as their knowledge and conscience guided them, or as they were influenced by the instruction, persuasion, and example of their spiritual guides and fellow-believers.

2. **Corruption and enslavement of the Church.**—This happy condition of freedom from external control, and the absence of internal dominion and tyranny, did not

last long. Success meant failure—failure to maintain the purity which should be the distinguishing characteristic of all believers, and failure to hold fast the liberty which is their rightful inheritance. As soon as Christians became numerous, and their power began to be felt, the spirit of the world crept into the Church, and its deteriorating influence commenced to operate. When the Roman Empire was at length conquered, and its masters, from Constantine onwards (313), ranged themselves on the side of Christianity, and constituted themselves the friends and protectors of the new religion, those influences operated at an accelerated pace. Besides suffering from the enervating and corrupting consequences of a close, though informal alliance, with the representatives of a still practically heathen state, the Christians soon discovered that those representatives were more and more determined to regulate, govern, and utilise them, as they had done the worshippers and priests of the false gods they had professedly laid aside.

Then, too, the Bishops of Rome began to claim that position, and to wield that power, which in after years grew to so great a height, and became in their hands such a dreadful instrument for evil. It was natural perhaps that, situated as these bishops were, in the centre of the empire whence dominion over the nations had proceeded for so long a period, they should exercise the most potent influence, and receive by far the larger share of honour. But they were not content with simple precedence and more than ordinary respect; they aimed at absolute supremacy, and looked forward to universal and exclusive homage. Nor did they fail. By the persistent and determined efforts of such popes as NICHOLAS I. (857-867), GREGORY VII.—HILDEBRAND (1073-1086), and INNOCENT III. (1198-1216),

they raised themselves to the highest pinnacle of power. They stood, as it were, in the very place of God ; and holding undisputed sway over a vast spiritual kingdom, they did according to their will amongst the princes and people of the earth.

Neither in the old Roman Empire nor in the new states which grew out of its ruins was there ultimately any real independence. All the clergy and all the laity came under the dominion of Rome ; and this was exercised when considered necessary, by means of the civil and military power of the potentates, who held their positions by her expressed permission, or through her implied authority.

3. Christianity in Great Britain was for a long while independent of the Papacy. It was introduced at a very early period, probably within the lifetime of the apostles. By the end of the second century there was a flourishing British Church, which a hundred years later furnished recruits to the noble army of martyrs. In the fourth century British clergy took part in councils on the continent, and soon after a British theologian excited controversies which are still of importance. When the Roman dominion in Britain ceased, about 410, the whole country south of the Tees was nominally Christian, and its Church was in communion with, but not in subjection to, that of Rome. During the next hundred and fifty years the greater part of the land was occupied by heathen English, who drove the Christian Britons into Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany. Intercourse between the British and Roman Churches was now interrupted, and each developed on lines of its own. When they again came into contact, in the beginning of the seventh century, differences appeared, of no great account in themselves, but important as related

to the claim then put forth by the Roman Church for domination.

The missionaries under Augustine had in the meantime landed in England (597); and by the year 610 the Saxons in Kent had accepted Christianity in the Roman form. As converts multiplied, and the influence of the new-comers increased, they sought to bring the native clergy into subordination to the See of Canterbury, and through it to the Church of Rome. Gradually their purpose was accomplished. At the Council of Whitby, in 664, the representatives of the British Churches were obliged to consent to the adoption of Roman customs; and after the arrival of Theodore (669), who had been selected and consecrated by the Pope as Archbishop of Canterbury, the two Churches were amalgamated and reorganised, whilst retaining various national characteristics. This larger communion, henceforth to be known as the Church of England, became a branch of the Church of Rome. This is sometimes denied. But it is a remarkable fact that, notwithstanding energetic protests, sometimes amounting to rebellion, against the exactions and impositions of the Papal Court, no individual entitled or claiming to represent the Church of England ever disputed the spiritual supremacy of the Roman Pontiff.

4. John Wickliffe and the Lollards.—Although the English people submitted to this foreign domination, they could not be said to be wholly contented with it; nor were they altogether indifferent to the doctrines and the lives of their spiritual instructors. The nobles never took kindly to the Roman yoke; and their inferiors usually welcomed the endeavour of the brave defenders of truth and righteousness, who, from time to time, protested against the irregularities, the usurpations, and the extor-

tions of the clergy. Notably was this the case with *John Wickliffe*, the "Morning Star of the Reformation," who flourished about one hundred and fifty years before the immortal *Luther* began the Reformation in his own country. Previous to his advent, however, there was little inquiry into religious truth, and the instruction imparted by the clergy was generally received without doubt by the credulous multitude.

Wickliffe was born about the year 1320, probably at Spresswell near Richmond in Yorkshire. He was sent to Oxford at a very early age, where he soon distinguished himself for his learning, and for the courage and ability with which he maintained his opinions. He became master of Balliol College, and in 1374 was presented by the Crown to the rectory of Lutterworth. In the same year, he was sent as commissioner to Bruges to treat with the Pope's ambassador, and oppose his claims to regulate the Church and receive tribute from the Nation. After his return, he devoted himself energetically to the promotion of ecclesiastical reforms and the spread of pure doctrine amongst the people. To this end he translated the New Testament into English, and sent his "poor priests" up and down the country, to preach a simple gospel and explain the word of God. He attacked the vices of the clergy and the practices of the mendicant friars. He contended against compulsory confession, and the priestly power of absolution. He protested against the system of penances and indulgences. He disputed, moreover, the supremacy and infallibility of the Pope; and he denied the doctrine of Transubstantiation.

This last was especially obnoxious to the ecclesiastical authorities. He had previously been cited before the Archbishops' Court for his maintenance of the right of the secular power to control the clergy, and even to with-

draw endowments ; but he had escaped punishment. The Pope now ordered him to be regularly tried as a heretic, and he was brought before the archbishop in St. Paul's (1377) ; but owing to the influence of his friend, John of Gaunt, the assembly was broken up without coming to any adverse decision. Retiring to Lutterworth, he devoted himself mainly to his literary labours, and died there peaceably in 1384. Thirty years later, however, his writings were condemned as heretical by the Council of Constance (1414), and his bones were ordered to be dug up and burned. It was this same council which sentenced to the stake his zealous disciples, John Huss and Jerome of Prague.

The followers of Wickcliffe in England, who were at first very numerous, were called *Lollards* or Psalm Singers. Their liberal principles, and the outspoken zeal with which they propagated them, had undoubtedly something to do with preparing the way for the formidable "peasants' revolt" so ruthlessly suppressed by Richard II. and his nobles in 1381. They were not only regarded as inimical to the Church, but also as dangerous to the State ; and in 1401 a statute was passed to enable the authorities to burn those who were condemned as heretics. The first English victim thus put to death (in the same year) was a clergyman named William Sawtree ; but their most distinguished leader, who met a similar fate, was Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham (1417). Largely in consequence of this and subsequent persecutions the numbers of the Lollards declined. But though they never became an organised sect, they met together in secret places for Bible reading, mutual exhortation, and social worship ; and they missed no opportunity of diffusing religious knowledge, and inculcating pure morality. Thus their influence con-

tinued to be felt, and they gradually prepared the way for a greater reformation.

5. Beginning of the Reformation.—The chief promoter of the Reformation in England was a very different person from its humble but honest founder in Germany. Henry VIII. had no profound conviction of the errors of Popery, and the mischief it was bringing on the human race. Indeed, in 1521, some ten years before he took his first step towards breaking with Rome, he wrote a book against Luther, and thereby earned the flattering title of “Defender of the Faith”. It was only when this imperious monarch found that the man who then occupied the chair of St. Peter would not gratify him by declaring his marriage with Catherine invalid, that he began to drift apart from the religious system in which he had been brought up. He had the connection dissolved by Archbishop Cranmer’s Ecclesiastical Court (1533); and he then proceeded to restrict the power of the Papacy in his dominions, and to curtail its revenues. The following year he had his royal person proclaimed, by an obsequious Parliament and a trembling body of clergy, “The only Supreme Head of the Church” in England, and required all his subjects to acknowledge his ecclesiastical supremacy by a solemn oath. For refusing to do this, Sir Thomas More and Bishop Fisher were put to death (1535).

6. Suppression of the Monasteries.—Acting on the new authority he had assumed, the king appointed commissioners to visit the monasteries. When their report was presented, many of these religious houses were suppressed, and their revenues disposed of (1536)—Henry himself appropriating a considerable share. A little

later (1539) he did the same with the abbeys and greater monasteries, and with the additional spoils largely increased his own wealth and that of his favourites.

In the meantime the king had been excommunicated by the Pope, who was greatly incensed at his high-handed and sacrilegious proceedings. Henry, however, on his part, resolved utterly to repudiate the last remnant of Papal authority: a resolution which was embodied in an Act of Parliament in 1537.

7. Changes in Doctrine.—Some alterations were also made in the doctrines required to be believed by the people. The king framed the articles in consultation with Cranmer and some other bishops, and sent them into Convocation¹ to be dutifully considered and agreed to. In these some few of the grosser corruptions of mediæval Popery were rejected; but Transubstantiation, Auricular Confession, and the Worshipping of Images were left untouched. There was no appreciable interference with rites and ceremonies.

As with the question of the Supremacy, so with the Doctrines, Worship, and Discipline of the Church; no dissent was tolerated. As yet, the people scarcely dreamed of a religion uncontrolled by the Pope or the State; and they had little idea of the freedom enjoyed by the Primitive Church. But many had become curious and thoughtful respecting the recent changes: echoes of Wickliffe and the Lollards were heard; and there was much talk of Luther and the Great Reformation on the continent. Some, too, had read Tyndale's English New

¹ Convocation usually consists of dignitaries: the Upper Houses of bishops only; and the Lower Houses of deans, and archdeacons, and proctors elected by the cathedral chapters and by the clergy (Lane).

Testament (which was printed in 1526), and were more or less familiar with Gospel principles. But however interested people were in religious questions, they were not permitted to act as well as think for themselves. Outward dissent from the doctrines of the Established Church, and non-observance of its forms and ceremonies, were promptly and cruelly suppressed. Rigid laws were passed to enforce acquiescence and obedience, and both Papist and Protestant offenders were severely dealt with—the former generally being hanged, whilst the latter were more frequently burned. Even then, as throughout the subsequent persecutions for Nonconformity, *Protestant Dissenters were punished by the ecclesiastical authorities as the greater and more grievous offenders*. The first Protestant martyr, under the new order, was *John Lambert*, who was burned at Smithfield for denying the doctrine of Transubstantiation. His last words in the flames were “None but Christ”.

8. Retrogression.—Several editions of the English Bible had been printed when, in 1538, the king ordered a copy to be placed in every church for the use of all who could read. In 1542 the Scriptures were required to be read in English in the Church service, and the following year an English litany was authorised. But Henry began to think he had gone too far. Reactionary advisers gained his ear, and the people were commencing to think for themselves to an extent which he deemed dangerous. The last few years of Henry's reign were therefore distinctly retrogressive. The reading of the English Bible was forbidden, except to the nobles and gentry; and it was further enacted that recourse must be had to the Catholic and Apostolic Church for the settlement of all controversies. A cruel persecution was,

moreover, commenced against the reforming party, in which the most conspicuous sufferer was the gentle but heroic Anne Askew (1546).

9. The Reformation not primarily the work of the Church.—The reforms effected under Henry VIII. were *not* primarily the work of the Church acting through Convocation. The royal supremacy and other innovations were indeed voted by that body, but reluctantly and under compulsion. During the preceding two hundred years, many laws had been made by the civil power to check the impositions of the Pope, and by ruinous penalties to restrain the clergy from acting as his agents; but these were frequently defied or ignored, because the rulers had not the courage or the power to enforce them. Henry, however, when he shook himself free from the Papacy, had the whole clerical body at his mercy, and he resolutely bent them to his will. The acts of Convocation therefore had only the appearance of being voluntary. They were due not to any real desire of the clergy for change, but to their fear of incurring the serious displeasure of the king.

10. Another Advance.—As soon as the youthful Edward came to the throne (1547), preparations were made for further reform. The majority of the Council of Regency were in favour of progress; and the king himself, being in strong sympathy with the movement, manifested, as time went on, increasing interest in it. The rigours of the late reign were first relaxed; the prisoners were released; and many who had become exiles for conscience' sake returned home. Amongst these were Miles Coverdale, the translator of the Bible; John Rogers, the proto-martyr in the next reign; and

John Hooper, who afterwards became Bishop of Gloucester, and likewise suffered in the Marian persecution. Then a visitation of the clergy was made, and a book of homilies was ordered to be prepared for their assistance. Injunctions also were issued as to the conduct of Public Worship, special attention being directed to the folly of Image Worship and the abuse of Pilgrimages. Moreover when Parliament met, it repealed several of the old Popish laws, regulated the appointment of bishops, and enacted that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper should be administered in both kinds.

11. Commission to Reform Liturgical Services.—This was appointed by Parliament, and as a result of its labours the First English Service Book or Liturgy was published (1548). It was mainly taken from the old Roman Missals or Mass Books then in use; and consequently contained much that was objectionable to the more ardent reformers. However, in 1549, it was imposed on all under severe penalties by the *First Act of Uniformity*. The new liturgy was by no means popular with the people or palatable to the clergy; and resistance being made, some of those who opposed its introduction, were variously punished, and others who were convicted of heresy were put to death—so little idea had the leading Reformers of Religious Liberty.

The most notable Nonconformist was *John Hooper*. In his judgment the changes did not go far enough. He flatly refused to wear the prescribed vestments, and he boldly declared that Christ's kingdom was a spiritual kingdom, and that neither pope nor prince ought to claim supreme dominion over it. Being requested to preach before the king, he advocated the restoration of the Primitive Church Order, and did not hesitate to demand

the abolition of all ecclesiastical vestments, crosses and altars. It was with great difficulty that he was persuaded to become a bishop, and to wear the conventional garments at his consecration. He only did so when the wording of the oath of supremacy was altered to his satisfaction, and on the understanding that he might please himself about the vestments afterwards. Hooper exercised great influence over his contemporaries, and did more perhaps than any man to further the real interests of Protestant Christianity. It was principally through his exertions and those of Ridley, Bishop of London, that the Book of Common Prayer was reconstructed and issued in a simpler and purer form (1552). This was the occasion of the imposition of the *Second Act of Uniformity*.

12. Further Reformation Prevented.—Progress towards a more thorough reformation was fully intended by Hooper, Ridley and their Protestant fellow-labourers; but the young king died before the proposed changes could be made, and then efforts to that end were suddenly checked by the accession of the *Princess Mary*, who was known to be a zealous Roman Catholic. The Reformation, therefore, was necessarily imperfect. It was as Milton said, a “Reformation that needed to be reformed”. The morning had dawned; but the full light of the gospel day of purity and freedom had not arrived. What had been providentially accomplished was effected in spite of the open and secret opposition of the greater part of the clergy. The people generally were still Papist at heart; and now the Protestant principles which had begun to make headway were to be sternly forbidden and repressed. The very semblance of religious liberty would for a time be banished to other shores.

CHAPTER II

PERSECUTION AND REPRESSION

IN THE REIGNS OF MARY AND ELIZABETH

1553-1603

1. **The Marian Persecution.**—The new queen soon showed her sympathy for the Old Faith, and her antipathy to the Reformation. One of her first acts was to release the principal Roman Catholic prisoners, and to put the leading Protestants in their place. She then caused the ejected priests to be restored to their churches, images to be replaced, and the ancient mode of worship once more to be adopted. Parliament was somewhat averse to set aside the Prayer-book, reintroduce the Mass, and annul the laws made in favour of Protestant Reform during the past reign ; but the members were forced to submit to the queen's will. Moreover, after Mary's marriage with Philip of Spain, they felt themselves compelled to formally acknowledge the Pope's jurisdiction over England, and to renew the law against heretics. Some difficulty was at first experienced in putting these laws into force ; but, at length, the bigotry of the queen and her more extreme advisers prevailed, and a storm of persecution followed. During Mary's short reign Archbishop Cranmer, Bishops Hooper, Ridley and Latimer, and nearly three hundred other martyrs perished in the flames (1553-1558).

2. **Rise of Puritans and Nonconformists.**—There was little opportunity during the sanguinary reign of Queen Mary for dissatisfied Protestants to express their dissent from, and to agitate for, further improvements in the form of Church government established by Henry VIII., and confirmed by his successor. But the reformers often met for worship in secret; and sometimes in these gatherings they carried on discussion concerning ecclesiastical as well as theological questions. It was, however, amongst the numerous exiles on the continent, who had fled for their lives to such places as Frankfort, Strasburg, Zurich, Basle and Geneva, that controversy was principally carried on, and that differences of opinion and practice became more accentuated. Some adhered strictly to Episcopacy, and held tenaciously to the Second Service Book of King Edward; whilst others, who were acquainted perhaps with the celebrated *John A'Lasco* and his "Church of the Strangers," formed in London after the Presbyterian model in 1550, or who came more especially under the influence of Calvin and the Swiss divines, were for a freer kind of government and a simpler sort of worship.

These reformers were called *Puritans*, because they strove to purify the Church from error and corruption; and at a later period *Nonconformists*,¹ because they refused to conform to the rites and ceremonies of the Established Church. When, however, the hope of further reformation was relinquished and the reformers proceeded to set up Churches of their own, they were styled

¹ The term *Nonconformist*, however, was not generally used until the passing of the Act of Uniformity in 1662, and two thousand clergymen came out of the Church rather than conform. Afterwards, when toleration was secured, the word *Dissenter* was preferred, but the two terms were often used interchangeably.

Separatists and *Sectaries*. The name Puritan was then generally limited to those Episcopalians who, whilst remaining in the Establishment, still sought to bring about its further reformation.

3. Re-establishment of the Protestant Church.—

The exiles returned on the accession of Elizabeth. They expected, as did many of the people, that the Protestant religion would be restored, and further much needed reforms effected. In the latter hope, however, they were keenly disappointed. The queen was duly declared "Supreme Governor in all causes ecclesiastical" as well as civil; and she thereupon proceeded to settle the affairs of the Church, by giving instructions for the repeal of the Romish laws, and the revival of those passed in the preceding reigns to suppress Popery and establish the Protestant Faith. But being possessed of the autocratic domineering spirit of her father, she made up her mind to be the real Head of the Church; and she had no intention of permitting the reformers to go to any great length in the way of fresh innovations. When, therefore, the Prayer-book, and the articles of religion had been reviewed, it was found that no material changes were made in either doctrine or ritual.

4. **Third Act of Uniformity.**—This followed immediately afterwards (1559), and the queen took care that it should be obeyed. The Romish bishops and clergy who refused to subscribe were deprived of their offices; and none were admitted to the vacancies thus created but those who gave an unqualified assent both to Her Majesty's supremacy and to the articles contained in the Act. Irregularities in worship were dealt with by

the *Court of High Commission*,¹ appointed by the queen in virtue of her position as Head of the Church. Its officers made a visitation of the various ecclesiastical districts, punishing recalcitrant clergymen, and removing images, crosses, and sundry other relics of Popery. They seem, however, to have exceeded their powers, and to have allowed the populace, who accompanied them in great numbers, to commit excesses in the wanton destruction of church furniture. In this they incurred the displeasure of Elizabeth, who herself revered some of these things.

As was to have been expected, a number of the returned exiles, with the additional knowledge they had acquired abroad of what a reformation should be, found themselves unable to subscribe to the new Act of Uniformity, and declined the offer of livings. A few even, as *Bernard Gilpin* and *Miles Coverdale*, refused the honour of bishoprics because they had scruples concerning the vestments required to be worn, and the rites and ceremonies to be observed by the clergy. Others again, not quite so scrupulous and altogether less bold, as *Grindal*, *Sandys*, and *Pilkington*, only accepted these exalted positions after much hesitation, and with not a little fear as to the course they were taking.

5. Opposition of the Puritans.—Whilst some of the Puritans thus ventured to acknowledge their nonconformity, those who were too timid to do so, or were more doubtful of their duty, endeavoured to obtain in Convocation some modification of the articles to be sub-

¹This was in addition to the older Court of the Star Chamber. It was an entirely arbitrary court, composed of the sovereign and the members of the council.

scribed, and the ceremonies to be observed. Debates waxed warm, especially concerning the latter, and the question of vestments occupied a considerable amount of attention. But the efforts of the reformers were to no purpose. The thirty-eight articles (afterwards thirty-nine) and the ecclesiastical regulations were ratified in 1563. Nothing of importance was altered, and absolute submission was strictly enjoined. *Archbishop Parker*, who was rapidly becoming a notorious persecutor, declared in the course of the discussion, his opinion that when the ministers felt the smart of poverty and want they would comply readily enough. "The wood," said he, "is but yet green." In accordance with his advice persecution was rigorously carried on; and numbers of Puritans were deprived of their livings, and left to get their bread as best they could.

Two of the most conspicuous of the sufferers were the venerable *Miles Coverdale* and *John Foxe*, the martyr-ologist. The former had been imprisoned in the late reign, and narrowly escaped the fire. But, although he was held in great esteem, and justly celebrated for his learning and preaching, as well as for his piety and constancy, no preferment was given him under the new regime; and because of his continued nonconformity, he was persecuted from place to place, and ultimately died in poverty at the age of eighty-one, 1568. His remains were buried in St. Bartholomew's, London, and the funeral was attended by vast crowds of sorrowing people. Much the same treatment was meted out to John Foxe, whose "*Book of Martyrs*" had recently made so great an impression. The rulers thought nothing of the valuable services he had rendered to the Protestant cause, and were only mindful of his unwillingness to conform to the ceremonies they had prescribed. When Foxe was

summoned before the Commission and requested to make the necessary declaration, he took his Greek Testament from his pocket and said : "To this only will I subscribe". In his case, however, the commissioners refrained from undue severity, probably because they shrank from the unpopularity it was likely to entail. Foxe himself was apparently indifferent as to what course they took. He told them he had nothing in the Church but a Prebend in Salisbury ; and added : "If you take that from me, much good may it do you".

6. Thomas Cartwright.—Much controversy ensued on the refusal of the dominant party to afford satisfaction to the reformers, and various pamphlets were published in protest. Those which made the most stir were the two "Admonitions to Parliament for the Reformation of Church Discipline," the first written by *John Field* and *Thomas Wilcox*, and the second by *Thomas Cartwright*, who was the most formidable opponent of the bishops and the Act of Uniformity. Whilst still professor of Trinity College, Cambridge, this able and courageous man assailed the Establishment with the greatest vigour. He did not concern himself so much about the vestments and ceremonies enjoined by the Church as about the form of its government. He insisted on the Presbyterian as being the true representation of New Testament methods. Going straight to the point, Cartwright vigorously denounced the whole hierarchical system, and unhesitatingly asserted the right of the people to choose their own ministers. Dr. Whitgift the Vice-Chancellor undertook to answer him ; but, getting the worst of the argument, settled the matter for the time by taking away his opponent's degree, depriving him of his fellowship, and expelling him from the university. The persecuted

professor then went abroad, but returned some time afterwards and continued the controversy. All his courage and learning, however, were of no avail against the kind of arguments his enemies could bring forward ; and after a long series of painful vicissitudes, he at length ended his days in an asylum provided for him at Warwick by his friend and patron the Earl of Leicester.

7. Separation from the Church.—Already the Puritans had begun to meet in divers places to receive the ministrations of their fellows who were able and willing thus to render them service ; but hitherto no very serious thought had been given to the question of actual separation from the Church. About the year 1566, however, as repression was unusually severe, even to the prohibition of clerical gatherings for mutual edification and spiritual improvement,¹ some of the deprived ministers and their friends met together privately ; and after a serious debate concerning the lawfulness of separation, they decided that “since they could not have the word of God preached nor the Sacraments administered without idolatrous geare . . . that therefore it was their duty to break off from the publick churches, and to assemble, as they had opportunity, in private houses and elsewhere, to worship God in a manner that would not offend against the light of their consciences”.

Agreeably to this resolution, separate congregations began to be formed ; though necessarily they were at first few in number, owing to the danger of discovery and consequent punishment of the members. The whereabouts of these infant Churches, the exact date of their

¹These were called “prophesyings,” and had been found to be very helpful to many who were desirous of studying God’s word and leading a holy life.

birth, and the sentiments they were beginning to develop respecting order, discipline, and government are somewhat difficult to discover. They were probably mostly of a Presbyterian character, as that system was better known to the exiles who had returned from places on the continent where they had seen it in operation. There was certainly a *Presbyterian* church with John Field as pastor in Wandsworth in 1572, which was soon afterwards suppressed; and there seems to have been a kind of *Independent* congregation in London in 1567, of which Richard Fitz was the pastor. It was probably more independent in fact than in theory, as at that time little or nothing was known of real congregational principles. There were also one or two *Baptist* congregations, formed principally through the influence of Dutch refugees who had fled from the sword of persecution in their own country.¹ In 1575 one of these congregations was discovered in Aldgate. Four persons recanted and bore burning torches to St. Paul's Cross in token of their repentance and submission, whilst eight others were banished, and two were burned.

8. **The Brownists, or Independents** as they were afterwards called, were mostly the followers of *Robert Brown*, who graduated at Cambridge in 1572, and became a preacher in the diocese of Norwich. He was very active in speaking and writing against the Establishment, especially in "*A Book that Showeth the Manners of all True Christians*" and "*A Treatise of Reformation without Tarrying for Any*," in which he enunciated the principle

¹ Persons holding Baptist opinions had begun to meet together at a much earlier period. In 1511 Baptists were punished, it is said, at Warsham. Probably the congregation at Hill Cliffe, Cheshire, had flourished from 1522.

of Congregationalism. At length, being persecuted for his outspoken opinions, he fled to Holland, and formed a church after his own model. Subsequently, however, after various vicissitudes and much contention with his brethren, he returned to England and conformed to the Established order.

The Brownists did not differ from the Church of England in doctrine. They took exception to its rites and ceremonies, and particularly to its government; believing that power should be centred not in the hierarchy but in the people—either directly by the members of each separate Church, or indirectly (as advocated by Henry Barrowe) through its elected elders. The Brownists, however, unlike their descendants the Independents, did not come fully to the conclusion that the Church ought not in any circumstances to be patronised and endowed by the State; and some held that the civil magistrates ought to exercise their power in favour of a Scriptural religion. To the Baptists alone, of the sects which had their rise in this period, belongs the honour of maintaining from the first, that the Church of Christ, being a spiritual kingdom, ought to be both as regards its government and its support altogether independent of the State. But the Brownists, after being deserted by their erratic leader, rapidly developed true Independent principles; and they became with the Baptists the progenitors of the Free Churchmen of to-day. Because of the identity of their principles as regards the government of the Church, these two sects of Nonconformists were sometimes spoken of as Independents. This was specially so at the time of the Commonwealth, when both were included in the Independent Party.

9. Persecution of Brownists.—At this time perse-

cution raged against all Puritans who felt it to be their duty not to conform to the usages of the Established Church; but those who ventured to urge the necessity of separation were dealt with much more severely than others. The principles of the Brownists and their co-religionists, as the ecclesiastical authorities clearly saw, cut at the root of Episcopal authority, and must at all hazards be altogether suppressed. The Bishop of Norwich seems to have been particularly active in combating these unfortunate Separatists and bringing them to so-called justice. Many were apprehended and kept long in prison without any trial; others were at length tried, convicted and sentenced to various punishments; whilst two, *Elias Thacker* and *John Copping*, who were probably deemed more wicked and dangerous than the rest, were hanged at Bury St. Edmunds in 1583. The former was condemned for circulating Robert Brown's book, which denied the queen's supremacy in ecclesiastical affairs, and thus subverted the constitution of the Church. The latter was found guilty of the crime of neglecting to have his child baptised, because he objected to the empty form of getting a godfather and a godmother to be surety for its Christian behaviour.

10. Martin Marprelate Tracts.—Notwithstanding these cruel severities, the Puritans and Separatists continued their opposition to the Established Church. They did so, however, under great difficulties, as pulpit and press were closed to them; and they had no legal or certain opportunity for meeting together for counsel and worship after their own fashion. It is no wonder therefore that, as the days went by and brought no improvement in their unhappy lot, some of them becoming desperate and embittered should have endeavoured to

move their enemies by the envenomed shafts of ridicule and satire.

In 1587, the year before the *Spanish Armada*, when persecution should have ceased, and the queen and her counsellors have done their best to draw all classes of the community together to unitedly resist the coming invasion, the first of the celebrated Martin Marprelate Tracts appeared. They were the natural results of continued and relentless oppression, being written, it is supposed, by a club of Separatists whose friends had suffered much at the hands of the bishops. The tracts, about a dozen in number, were exceedingly clever. They were written, moreover, in a popular style, and contained pithy and pungent attacks upon the ecclesiastical tyrants, who by their arbitrary and cruel proceedings had brought so much trouble upon the land. Immediately upon their publication they created an immense sensation, and were quickly disseminated amongst all ranks of the people. They did little or no good, however, and enraged the prelates beyond measure. Persecution was redoubled, and extraordinary efforts were made to discover the daring authors of the tracts. Various persons were accused of being concerned in their production, and some were adjudged guilty and suffered punishment.

11. Martyrdom of Barrowe, Greenwood and Penry.
—The hand of Archbishop Whitgift, who made himself notorious for the vigour and persistence with which he persecuted the Nonconformists, pressed very heavily on Independents and Baptists. He filled the prisons with them; and like his brother of Norwich ten years before, he caused some of their leaders to be put to death. The case of the two ministers *Henry Barrowe* and *John Greenwood* was peculiarly touching, and called forth the loudly

expressed sympathy of the people. After languishing in prison two years, they were brought up and tried for writing seditious books and pamphlets, as their criticisms on the Government and usages of the Established Church were called. They were repeatedly examined and remanded back to prison, but at length were condemned to death. They were not permitted, however, to end their sorrows at once. They were indeed got ready for execution; but supplication being made on their behalf, they were reprieved with a view to their submission. Proving obstinate, they were incarcerated some time longer. They were then taken in a cart to Tyburn and exposed for hours under the gallows, to see once more if the terrors of death would make them recant their opinions, and promise obedience to the ecclesiastical authorities. As this treatment did not have the desired effect, they were again removed to Newgate. There their constancy remained unshaken; and after some further delay, they took the final journey to Tyburn, and were there executed before the eyes of a sorrowing multitude (6th April, 1593).

John Penry shared the same fate about six weeks afterwards at St. Thomas-a-Watering, south of the river. He was a remarkably lovable and gentle-spirited man, and has been deservedly called the "Apostle of Wales," being most untiring and devoted in his efforts for the benefit of his fellow-countrymen, though he does not seem to have done much personal evangelistic work amongst them. He was accused of writing some of the Marprelate Tracts. For a while he avoided arrest by fleeing to Scotland; but venturing to return, he was apprehended, and was soon convicted and condemned. He solemnly protested against the injustice of the sentence passed upon him; but his judges would not give time for any appeal to

be made on his behalf. A warrant was made out for his immediate execution, the relentless archbishop being the first to sign the document. It was then despatched to the sheriff, who, the very same day, 29th May, 1593, erected the gallows, and had the poor man hanged thereon—so fearful were his enemies that something should occur to prevent the sentence being carried out.

12. Separatists driven into Exile.—The persecution still continued, and persons suspected of nonconformity were constantly being haled before the High Commission Court, and forced to take the *ex officio* oath, by which they swore to reply truthfully to all the questions put to them. An examination similar in many ways to the Roman Inquisition was then held, which generally ended in the unfortunate prisoners proving themselves by their answers to be guilty on some point or another. In 1593 the *First Conventicle*¹ Act was passed, which dealt very severely with all persons who ventured to meet together for spiritual intercourse and Christian worship other than in the manner prescribed by the Established Church.

But shortly afterwards the violence of the persecution abated, and continued to be relaxed until after the death of Elizabeth. Possibly, the stern and unbending queen grew more tender-hearted as she drew near the end and the sorrows of life increased upon her; or it may be, that she and her council had discovered that over-severity was defeating its own purpose. But be that as it may, she

¹This word, however, was not then generally used. It came into vogue after the passing of the better known Conventicle Act of 1664. Dissenting meeting-places were then called, partly in derision perhaps, Conventicles, or places where little gatherings of obstinate and refractory persons were held for contumacious purposes.

contented herself henceforth with comparatively slight punishments for occasional disobedience, and the banishment of persistent offenders against her ecclesiastical laws. Persons who wilfully and repeatedly absented themselves from the churches, and neglected to observe the established form of public worship were sent out of the country, and went for the most part to Holland. Thither some of their leaders and friends had preceded them, having fled from the violence of the previous storm. This eventful exodus had consequences, of which the intolerant and short-sighted rulers who caused it little dreamed. Each congregation of freedom-loving Englishmen established on the continent became a centre of light and liberty; and some of them subsequently threw their radiant and energizing influences across the seas, and not only helped to mould the character of the mighty nation just about to be born, but contributed not a little to the overthrow of civil and ecclesiastic tyranny in England herself.

CHAPTER III

BEGINNINGS OF FREE CHURCH LIFE

FROM THE ACCESSION OF JAMES I. TO THE MEETING OF THE LONG PARLIAMENT

1603-1640

1. **Reformation in Scotland.**—In the meantime a more thorough reformation had been accomplished in the northern kingdom. The Scots had long been interested in Luther's courageous revolt, and the success of the Protestant cause in Germany; and as early as 1525 so many Lutheran books were read by the people, that the Scottish Parliament passed an act forbidding their importation. But it was too late to stop the spread and influence of the ideas they contained. Even severer measures failed; for although persecution commenced in earnest, and several persons were put to death, Protestantism grew and flourished. In 1557 many of the nobles and gentry took what is known as the *First Covenant*, to do all in their power to further the cause of Reformation; and in the following year they summoned the celebrated *John Knox* to their aid. (τ

This remarkable man was noted for the zeal and energy with which he promoted the Reformation. He was formerly a Popish priest, but was converted under the influence of *George Wishart* the martyr (1546). Having been captured by the French when they took

the Castle of St. Andrews, he was sent to the galleys, and thence to prison. After two years he was released at the instance of Edward VI., one of whose chaplains he became. He fled with others on the accession of Mary, and became pastor of the English Congregation at Frankfort, and afterwards of another at Geneva. He then returned to Scotland to contend with all his might for the Protestant cause of truth and freedom. It was chiefly through his energy, persistence, and courage that the battle was won, and Popery as a national institution banished from the land (1560). Presbyterianism was then established in its place, and has ever since continued the religion of the vast majority of the Scottish people. Knox died in 1572 at the age of sixty-seven. Over his grave in St. Giles' Churchyard the Regent Morton uttered the memorable panegyric: "Here lyeth a man who in his life never feared the face of man".

2. Puritans Disappointed in James I.—James VI., King of Protestant Scotland (who, on the death of Elizabeth in 1603, ascended the throne of England), was reported to be not only devoted to the Reformed Religion, but sincerely desirous of purifying it from all traces of superstition. The English Puritans therefore expected that he would continue, and perhaps extend, the small amount of toleration they had enjoyed during the declining years of Elizabeth. In 1581 he had subscribed the *National Covenant*, which bound him to hold and defend the Presbyterian Faith and Government; and again in 1590, when the covenant was renewed by the whole nation, he had stood in the *General Assembly* at Edinburgh and with his hands uplifted to heaven had "praised God that he was born in the time of the light of the gospel, and in such a place as to be king of

such a Church—the sincerest kirk in the world, unlike that of the neighbour kirk of England, whose service was an evil-said Mass”. But notwithstanding this solemn oath and emphatic declaration, the expectant Puritans were doomed to disappointment.

James was at heart utterly disgusted with the stiffness and rigidity of Presbyterianism, and thought most bitterly of the decorous way in which he had been obliged to comport himself whilst King of the Scots. Moreover, he could not forget the rude and hard treatment he had sometimes received from the different parties, who had from time to time possessed themselves of his royal person. He had dissembled then for his own ends; his promises and protestations were only what he called kingcraft. He was come now into the land of promise, which flowed with milk and honey. Nothing should prevent him from enjoying to the full his splendid inheritance. Being therefore safely seated on his new throne he threw over the name as well as the form of Presbyterianism; took to his bosom Episcopacy as the most likely to maintain and consolidate his power, and forthwith proceeded to give himself over to the gratification of his own desires. His oft-repeated maxim was: “No bishop, no king”. From such a man the Puritans and Separatists could expect little sympathy and less indulgence.

3. Hampton Court Conference.—The Puritans were permitted to state their grievances at a conference with the bishops at Hampton Court Palace, at which James was present (1604). His majesty himself condescended to take part in the discussions, to the entire satisfaction of the Episcopal party. The bishops, says Bennett, were in raptures with the king and declared

that for learning and piety he was the Solomon of his age. Bancroft,¹ Bishop of London, falling down on his knees, said: "My heart melteth for joy that the mighty God of His singular mercy hath given us such a King as since Christ's time the like hath not been". His grace of Canterbury, charmed with the wisdom of the Solomon, exclaimed, "Undoubtedly your majesty speaks by the special interposition of God!"

The conference was no better than a farce. From the first there was no hope of any arrangement being come to. During the two days in which the four Puritan representatives put their case calmly and dispassionately before their opponents, they were treated with but scant courtesy. Their desire for a purer and more simple form of worship was regarded with indifference, and they themselves were ridiculed and laughed to scorn. At length they were dismissed without the promise of any material change, and no hope of a final cessation of persecution. Indeed the pedant king, puffed up with a sense of his own wisdom, and quite carried away with the fulsome adulation of the bishops, ended the conference by scolding the ministers for their so-called obstinacy and stupidity, and declaring that "he would make them conform or harry them out of the land".

But the conference had one result which was not altogether anticipated. The Puritan Dr. Reynolds suggested a new translation of the Bible; and James, approving the idea, consented to make arrangements for carrying it out. A committee of some of the most learned men of the time was appointed, and the work

¹ Bancroft was the first prelate since the Reformation to affirm that Divine Right of Episcopacy which is the fundamental tenet of Modern Sacerdotalists.

was entered upon forthwith. It was finished in a few years, and published in 1611 as the "Authorized Version".

4. Renewed Persecution.—After this abortive conference, the authorities lost no time in endeavouring forcibly to secure uniformity of public worship according to the Anglican system. Convocation met and passed a number of canons, which made conformity far more irksome to the Puritans, and pressed very hardly upon them. Archbishop Bancroft compelled a strict and regular observance of the festivals of the Church; he revived the use of copes, surplices, caps, hoods and other things according to the First Service Book of Edward VI., all which had been much objected to; and ordered, moreover, a fresh subscription of the clergy. By these means several hundred ministers were silenced and deprived of their livings, and some of them were excommunicated and cast into prison. Afterwards James summoned the twelve judges into the Star Chamber, and induced them to declare that punishments inflicted by the High Commission for the infraction of these ecclesiastical laws were perfectly legal, and that penalties ought to be imposed on persons who framed or collected signatures to petitions protesting against them.

In consequence of these arbitrary proceedings, the condition of those who could not in conscience conform was most deplorable; and many, to escape being constantly harried, despoiled and imprisoned, went into exile as their predecessors had done. When the Gunpowder Plot was discovered (1605) matters became worse, as the Puritans were most unjustly suspected of disloyalty and treasonable designs. They incurred, indeed, much of the odium which properly belonged to the Papists, whose leaders had been guilty of such a desperate and diabolical conspiracy.

After this, in 1606, emigration was forbidden ; and the sufferers from royal suspicion and clerical animosity were obliged to find their way out of the country as secretly as they could.

5. The Pilgrim Fathers.—Amongst those who left their native shores about this time or shortly after were *Francis Johnson, Henry Ainsworth, Henry Jacob, John Smyth, Thomas Helwys, John Robinson, William Brewster* and *William Bradford*, the last three being *Fathers and Founders of the Free Church Colony in New England*. Most of these exiles were ministers who established churches after their own order in Amsterdam, Arnheim, Middleburgh, Leyden and other continental towns. John Smyth and Thomas Helwys were prominent Baptists. They joined the church at Amsterdam under the care of Francis Johnson and Henry Ainsworth. But as they could not persuade the members to fall in with their views on Baptism, they withdrew and established another church elsewhere, which was characterised by its Arminian doctrines and its distinctly anti-State-Church principles.

John Robinson and his friends were also connected with the Congregation at Amsterdam ; but finding it expedient to seek another place, they removed to Leyden, and founded a church there after the Congregational order. The step proved to be a happy one. Under the guidance of its learned, wise, and spiritually minded pastor, the congregation grew and prospered and unity and concord prevailed. Many of the members, however, realising acutely the disadvantages of living under sufferance amongst foreigners, where they were exposed to so many hardships and their children to such numerous temptations, resolved after much anxious

consideration to remove once more, and endeavour to establish a home in the strange land they had heard of across the western seas. After considerable trouble and many disappointments, arrangements for the voyage were at length completed; and the enterprising emigrants, to the number of about one hundred, finally set sail in the little ship *Mayflower* on 5th of August, 1620. They crossed the stormy Atlantic safely, and arrived on the 21st of December following in Plymouth Bay, on the shores of which they commenced their interesting and eventful colonial career.

Pastor Robinson was a beautiful character, a devout Christian, a clear and instructive preacher, an earnest minister, and a kindly, lovable man. Although a good dialectician, and a stout defender of his Protestant Free Church principles, he was possessed of an open mind and a broad Catholic spirit. Some of his excellent parting words to his pilgrim flock deserve to be recorded even in this brief history. "I charge you," he said, "before God and His blessed angels, that you follow me no further than you have seen me follow the Lord Jesus Christ. If God reveal anything to you by any other instrument of His, be as ready to receive it as you were to receive any truth by my ministry; for I am persuaded the Lord hath more truth yet to break forth from His holy word. For my part I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of those Reformed Churches, which are come to a period in religion, and will go at present no further than the instrument of their reformation."

6. State of Religion in England.—In the meanwhile the religious condition of the nation was not improving. James was still vigorously striving to advance the interests of Episcopacy in the two kingdoms; but at the same time, he did not a little for the progress of

Popery, by relaxing the penal laws against the professors of that religion, in order that he might the better secure the success of his scheme to marry his son Charles to a Spanish or a French Roman Catholic princess. Moreover, the example of his own self-indulgent private life was no stimulus to the highest form of morality; nor did his public official acts tend generally to secure that end. A change had begun to take place towards the close of Elizabeth's reign in the observance of Sunday, owing to the appearance of Dr. Bound's book on "*The Obligations of the Lord's Day*". At that time Sunday in England was much like what it now is in all countries entirely under the influence of Romanism. It was a day for sport and pleasure, dancing and theatrical entertainments, and too often, it may be added, of riot and debauchery. But the book, and the appreciative manner it was spoken of by the Puritan ministers, had influenced many persons to attempt a better use of the day, notwithstanding the fact that the publication was prohibited and copies called in by Archbishop Whitgift. The volume was reprinted in 1606, and came under the notice of the king. His majesty disapproved of its teaching, and endeavoured to counteract its effect by commanding the clergy to read from their pulpits the notorious "*Book of Sports*," a royal proclamation to authorise and regulate games and amusements on the Lord's Day. Many of the ministers, by the direction of the good *Archbishop Abbot*, refused to obey the king's edict; but others of the more worldly-minded and subservient complied, and an increase of riot and revel was the result. The people wanted but little encouragement. Their minds were dark and their natures debased, and, alas! but few cared for their souls. Some of the godly Episcopalians did their best; but none of the nonconforming ministers were permitted to exercise

themselves in any way for the spiritual welfare of the masses.

7. Gloomy Prospects under Charles I.—James died in 1625, and was succeeded by his son Charles. The new king early discovered his arbitrary disposition, his zeal for Prelacy, his partiality for Popery, and his disregard for the opinions and sufferings of those who differed from him in religious as in political matters. He was a better man than his father; but he had the same high notion of what he regarded as his own divinely entrusted rights. Moreover, he chose for his friends those only who would vigorously uphold his prerogative, and zealously advance the interests of the Established Church. The desire for liberty in Church and State was rapidly growing; and the king was soon at variance with his parliament, because it would not give him unlimited power, and sought to lessen that which he had already. His third parliament drew up the famous *Petition of Right*, by which was secured a large amount of protection for the persons and property of the people. His majesty reluctantly consented to it; but afterwards dismissed the parliament, and in an evil hour determined to govern without one. Charles's chief adviser in ecclesiastical affairs was *Dr. William Laud*, who in 1633 became Archbishop of Canterbury. This strong-minded, imperious prelate formed the design of partially assimilating the Church of England to that of Rome; and so long as his power lasted, strenuously endeavoured to bend the nation to his will. Laud was accordingly the enemy of all Puritans and Nonconformists who in any way opposed his purpose, and he persistently pursued them with the most relentless severity. He set his agents industriously to work to seek out all unauthorised gatherings, and

remorselessly persecuted those who took part in them. Some of the Nonconformists succeeded in escaping beyond sea; and about this time there was a large emigration of Puritans to Massachusetts Bay (1629).

8. Victims of Laud's Persecution.—His grace was particularly severe with preachers and writers against episcopal authority; and some of the punishments meted out to active and obnoxious Nonconformists were most cruel. *Dr. A. Leighton*, the father of the celebrated Archbishop of Glasgow, had written a vigorous and pungent book entitled "*Zion's Plea against Prelacy*". For this he was treated with shocking barbarity. He was sentenced to be imprisoned for life, and required to pay a fine of £10,000. Before being finally shut up, however, he was ordered to be severely whipped and set in the pillory, there to have one of his ears cut off, one side of his nose slit, and his cheek branded with a red-hot iron; then, with a refinement of cruelty worthy only of the days of the Spanish Inquisition, he was to be brought up a few days afterwards to be whipped again, have the remaining ear cut off, the other side of his nose slit, the other cheek branded, and then, thus mutilated and bleeding, to be taken back to perpetual confinement.

This dreadful sentence, being rigorously carried out, caused a shudder to run throughout the entire community, and raised a cry of universal horror and execration. The indignation of the people was still further aroused by a somewhat similar punishment inflicted on *Dr. Bastwick*, a physician, *William Prynne*, a barrister, and *Henry Burton*, a divine. In these cases the whippings and mutilations were followed by a vindictive aggravation of their sufferings. These poor victims of

Episcopal fear and animosity were separated and sent away to distant places, where they were permitted to hold no communication whatever with their friends. Proceedings such as these exasperated the people beyond measure; and whilst they quickened the thoughts of some to physical resistance and actual rebellion, they hastened the departure of others, more peaceably disposed, to the land of freedom in the West. Not a few, however, were prevented from leaving.

9. Rebellion of Scotland against Episcopacy and the Prayer-book.—Meanwhile the Scots were becoming restive under the determined attempt of Charles and Laud to force Episcopacy and the Liturgy upon them. A special Service Book was prepared, differing but little from that in use in England. When, however, the ministers were ordered to use it in their churches, most of them refused, and the people raised tumultuous protests. It is affirmed that at St. Giles' Church in Edinburgh, one Jennie Geddes, who kept a vegetable stall close by, threw her stool at Dean Hanna's head as he was about to read prayers, shouting, "Out, thou false thief! Dost thou say Mass at my lug?" A great uproar at once arose, and the officiating clergy had to flee from the mob for their lives. Somewhat similar scenes occurred in other places, and the whole country was up in arms. Then meetings were held, united protests were made, and ministers, nobles and people renewed their National Covenant, and formed themselves into a new *Band of Defence* to uphold it (1638).

The king, wishing to temporise, sent his High Commissioner, the Marquis of Hamilton, with instructions to consent for a while to the suspension of the Service Book; but at the same time to dissolve the rebellious

associations called *Tables*, and require the *Covenanters* to submit. He was unsuccessful, and Charles thereupon declared "he would never yield to their impertinent and damnable demands". He was, however, persuaded to make some concessions, and to summon a *General Assembly* of the Church, which met at Glasgow in the same year. This, being composed of Covenanters, proved refractory, and was formally dissolved; but the members would not disperse, and in spite of protest continued their sittings for several weeks. During this time they declared themselves independent of English control; abolished Episcopacy, its book of prayers, and all its rites and ceremonies; and proceeded forthwith to depose the bishops placed over them by James. They knew perfectly well that this open defiance of royal authority probably meant war; but they were not afraid of a conflict to maintain their rights, and immediately began to prepare for hostilities.

10. Calling of the Long Parliament.—The king had already been counselled to compel the obedience of the Scots; and in the spring of the following year began the first *Bishops' War*, by marching his army to the border. When face to face with the Scottish forces under General Lesley, however, he discovered that disaffection prevailed amongst his own men, and he could not trust them to fight heartily in his cause. He was obliged therefore to come to an agreement, by which he consented to acknowledge the changes that had taken place, hoping to be able to repudiate it at a later period. At the General Assembly which met shortly afterwards, the royal commissioners, acting on his instructions, did not agree to the extirpation of Prelacy on the ground of its being unlawful, as the Assembly had previously

declared ; and after much delay, they dismissed the ministers without formally ratifying any of their acts. Charles then summoned to his aid the *Short Parliament*, which, refusing to grant money for the war without a redress of grievances, was speedily dissolved. Meanwhile the Scots, being incensed at the king's evident intention not to abide by his own promises, and encouraged moreover by the malcontents in England, prepared for a struggle ; and marching their army over the border, they took possession of Newcastle. Charles was now in sore straits. His ecclesiastical policy towards his fellow-countrymen had brought about war once more, and he found himself without the means of carrying it on. His arbitrary methods of raising funds apart from the assistance of the representatives of the people had failed, having proved most unsatisfactory and very dangerous ; and he was after all compelled in 1640 to call another Parliament, the *Long Parliament*, which sat until it was dissolved by Cromwell in 1653.

CHAPTER IV

PRELATE, PRESBYTER, OR PASTOR

FROM THE MEETING OF THE LONG PARLIAMENT TO THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF EPISCOPACY

1640-1660

1. **Partial Cessation of Persecution.**—Now commenced perhaps the most interesting and instructive period of English religious history—the period in which the forces represented by Prelacy, Presbyterianism and Independency struggled for the mastery. Probably none of the members of the new Parliament were Separatists; but most of them were thoroughly imbued with the Puritan spirit, and were so disgusted with the manifest evils resulting from the despotic exercise of kingly power and priestly domination, that they resolved to limit the former and put an end to the latter. Most of the cruel repressive laws were, by common consent or tacit understanding, kept in abeyance; and almost as soon as Parliament met, the Houses objected to the illegal proceedings of Convocation, in continuing to sit after the late Parliament had been dissolved, and in passing more irritating and obnoxious ecclesiastical laws. Then, to the great joy of the people, they went on to impeach Archbishop Laud, and release the victims of his misplaced severity. The affecting petition of the venerable Dr. Leighton to be released from his sufferings drew tears

from the eyes of the members of the House of Commons; and the scene on the arrival of Prynne, Bastwick, and Burton from their respective places of confinement was most impressive. The whole city was moved. Great numbers went out to meet them on horseback, with rosemary and bays in their hats, and multitudes accompanied them back with hearty shouts of grateful gladness.

2. Nonconformists Worship in Public.—The different companies of Nonconformists who worshipped in private, and had shifted about from place to place to avoid discovery, now began to appear in public. Probably the first to do so was the little church of Independents founded by *Henry Jacob* in 1616, and subsequently presided over by *John Lathrop*, *Samuel Howe*, and others. It was then located in Southwark. But public worship in any other form than that of the Established Church was still an ecclesiastical offence, for the penal laws against Puritans and Separatists were not yet abolished. When information of the fact was given therefore, some of the members of the congregation were brought before the House of Lords, and charged with denying the king's supremacy and meeting in a separate assembly. They answered boldly that they acknowledged no head but Christ, and that such laws were contrary to the word of God. Instead of being committed to prison they were only reprimanded; and on the following Sabbath several of the members attended their service, and after the administration of the sacrament, contributed to their collection for the poor. Thus the hitherto persecuted Separatists took courage; and continuing to meet in public without much hindrance from their enemies, they began rapidly to increase. Bishop Hall, whilst

addressing the House a short time afterwards, affirmed that in and about London there were no fewer than fourscore congregations of different kinds of sectaries.

3. Drastic Proceedings of the Parliament.—It was not long before Parliament promoted certain reforms in public worship, and sent out commissioners to effect the removal from the churches of images, altars, crucifixes, superstitious pictures, and other monuments and relics of Popery; and it is unhappily true that in carrying out their instructions, fanaticism, stupidity and greed found occasion to plunder and destroy much that was of great artistic value, and of which the loss is irreparable (see pp. 16, 54). The members also held long debates respecting the liturgy, the ordination of ministers, and the divine right of bishops, and even entertained a "*Root and Branch Petition*" for the abolition of the hierarchy altogether (1641). The king interposing made matters worse. The Houses became more obstinate, and shortly afterwards proceeded to impeach and execute his favourite, *Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford*. Subsequently they extorted from the king an undertaking that they should not be dissolved without their own consent; they abolished the obnoxious Courts of the Star Chamber and High Commission which had worked such terrible mischief; and they forced his majesty to sign a bill excluding the bishops from the House of Lords.

4. Outbreak of the Civil War.—Meanwhile the king's affairs went from bad to worse. Seeing no prospect of making headway against the reforming Parliament, as the Scots were on its side, he took a journey to Edinburgh to conciliate and gain them over to his own cause. But although they readily received his

majesty's submission, and listened respectfully to his gracious promises, they cautiously refrained from committing themselves, and they showed no eagerness to render him effectual aid. Charles returned therefore quite disappointed, and in a far from amiable mood.

The sudden news of the Irish rebellion, and the awful massacre of Protestants which accompanied it, still further increased the king's difficulties; as the people were horrified, and greatly feared the bringing over of an army of savage Papists to treat them in the same barbarous manner. When therefore his majesty, having somewhat recovered his crestfallen spirits and completed the necessary arrangements, went to the House of Commons to seize five of the most active members in order to overawe the rest, a great commotion arose, and preparations to forcibly resist him were immediately made. Thereupon the baffled king retired north, and a few months afterwards erected his standard at Nottingham as a signal for the commencement of civil war (1642).

5. The Westminster Assembly of Divines.—As it seemed desirable to settle ecclesiastical affairs on a more satisfactory basis than by the occasional interference of Parliament, several attempts were made in 1642 to appoint a commission for the purpose; but these had been frustrated by the king. In January of the following year, however, the Root and Branch Policy was adopted, and Episcopacy, as the national form of religion, was abolished. It was felt necessary therefore to put something else in its place; and the decision to effect the change was undoubtedly hastened by the Scots, who insisted, as a condition of their aid, that there should be uniformity of doctrine and discipline between the two countries. The *Assembly of Divines* was accordingly

convened, and sat for the first time on 1st July, 1643.

This Assembly, which was really an advisory committee to assist Parliament in matters ecclesiastical, consisted of one hundred and twenty ministers and thirty laymen, of whom ten were lords and twenty commoners. There were no Baptists amongst them, and only five or six Independents. Some Episcopal divines were included in the list; but very few attended, as they shrank from assisting in the changes likely to be proposed, and dreaded the wrath of the king, who had forbidden the meetings to take place. The majority were Presbyterians (of whom there were six commissioners from Scotland). They were the representatives of numerous Puritans in the Church, who were not prepared to go to extreme lengths in promoting religious reforms, and who found in Presbyterianism a system less removed than Independency from that in which they had been brought up. They were moreover sincerely attached to the idea of a National Church, and hoped to be able in the arrangements about to be made to find some means of satisfying the conscientious objections of most of those who had separated from it.

Much of the time of the Assembly was taken up with debates on the form of Church to be adopted, and the question of Toleration to be extended to those who should find themselves unable to agree to it. The Independents upheld the right of individual congregations to govern themselves and ordain their own ministers; but the Presbyterians contended that the power of government should be delegated to Presbyteries and Synods, which should ordain ministers and exercise authority over the different congregations committed to their charge. It was however on the second question that the most exciting discussions occurred. The Independents strove

ably for liberty of conscience, and pleaded that toleration should be extended to others who might differ from the majority of those present, and that nothing in the shape of persecution should take place. But they lived in an unenlightened and intolerant age, and they pleaded in vain.¹ It was voted by the Assembly that Presbyterianism should be the religion of the State ; and so fearful were the members that toleration would result in licence, disorder, and disintegration, that they refused distinctly to grant it. Thereupon Jeremiah Burroughes, one of the Independent representatives, made the following noble declaration :—

“That if their congregations might not be exempted from the coercive power of the classes (presbyteries) ; if they might not have liberty to govern themselves in their own way so long as they behaved themselves peaceably towards the civil magistrate, they were resolved to suffer or go to some other place in the world where they might enjoy their liberty. But while men think there is no way of peace but by forcing all to be of the same mind ; while they think the civil sword is an ordinance of God to determine all controversies of divinity, and that it must needs be attended with fines and imprisonment to the disobedient ; while they apprehend there is no medium between strict uniformity and a general confusion of all things ; while these sentiments prevail, there must be a base subjection of men’s consciences to slavery, a suppression of much truth and great disturbance in the Christian world.”

¹ Even many of the Independents were not quite prepared for complete toleration. It would have been a marvel if they were. They doubted the expediency of extending it to Unitarians and violent sectaries such as the extreme Anabaptists ; and, like all their Protestant fellow-subjects, thought that the dangerous Roman Catholics should be restrained.

Having decided that conformity should be enforced on all outside the Church by the hand of the civil power, the Assembly considered the amount of authority the State ought to exercise within it. The ministers could not see that alliance with the State and dependence upon it for material support necessarily carried with it subjection to its authority, and they claimed the right to manage all their own internal affairs. But the Parliament was very jealous of its rights. It proved to be distinctly Erastian; and, holding that in the Church there is neither inherent spiritual independence nor divine right of self-government, it set aside the claim. The Assembly sat till 22nd February, 1649—a little over five years, and held 1163 sessions. It then continued as a committee for the examination and licensing of ministers till the dissolution of the Long Parliament in 1653, when it was dispersed. The principal results of its labours (besides the establishment of Presbyterianism in place of Episcopacy) were the preparation of the Directory of Public Worship, in which details were left somewhat to the discretion of the officiating minister, a Confession of Faith, the Longer and Shorter Catechisms, and a Review of the Thirty-nine Articles.

6. Establishment of Presbyterianism.—As soon as the Assembly met in 1643, the "*Solemn League and Covenant*" was taken, and subscribed by the members of the House of Commons in St. Margaret's Church. This bound the part of the nation under the control of Parliament to a new ecclesiastical system, which should exclude Popery, Prelacy, Superstition, Heresy and Schism; and which was to be similar to that of Presbyterian Scotland, and was to be imposed, as far as possible, on Roman Catholic Ireland. The Assembly then proceeded to arrange the form of the new system. The draft was

finished and sent up to the Parliament in July, 1645, and duly confirmed; but owing to disputes on the question of the independence of the Church, the carrying out of the scheme was delayed, and as a matter of fact it never came into full operation. By 1646, however, there were twelve presbyteries in London, including 139 parishes within ten miles of the city. The First Provincial Synod met on 3rd May, 1647, in the Convocation House of St. Paul's. But these presbyteries were established with some difficulty, as the people generally did not show any great partiality for the system. It seems to have been received more readily in Lancashire, where large numbers signed the Solemn League and Covenant. Throughout the whole of that county there were nine presbyteries, including sixty parishes; and in May, 1649, a Provincial Synod met at Preston. Two eminent ministers, Heyrick of Manchester and Herle of Winwick, represented the county in the Westminster Assembly.

7. Growing Power of the Independents.—But although Presbyterianism made progress in and around London, and was popular in Lancashire, it had little success in other parts of the country, and the political predominance of its leaders soon came to an end. Their emphatic refusal to grant a limited toleration to those who differed from them had momentous consequences, both for themselves and the nation at large.

Religious liberty having been greatly encouraged and largely exercised during the past few years, sectarians had considerably increased both in numbers and influence, particularly in the army. The Puritan soldiers, whom Cromwell had led to victory at Marston Moor and Naseby, began to think that the prize for which they had

fought was about to be taken from them ; and they set themselves to consider the best means of preventing it. Their fears were much augmented by the discovery that the king (who had in the meantime been forced to surrender, and was then in confinement in the Isle of Wight) was negotiating a treaty with the Scots, with the object of dividing his opponents. The Scots were more than disposed to listen to his majesty's overtures, by reason of their dissatisfaction with the small amount of real power the Presbyterians, their co-religionists in England, had obtained, and because of their vexation at the general disregard for the obligations of the Sacred Covenant. The officers therefore, having certain knowledge that no oath or treaty could bind the king's conscience, and that he firmly believed that no faith ought to be kept with rebels, determined to ward off the danger by resorting to extreme measures. They resolved without further delay to purge the Parliament of the members disaffected to their cause, to seize the person of Charles for the second time, and afterwards to bring him to trial for treason against the State in endeavouring to set up and perpetuate arbitrary power by the aid of foreign troops—not the Scots only, but the sanguinary Irish rebels and the mercenary soldiers of other countries.

These bold and decisive measures were promptly carried out. The army was marched on London, the Parliament purged, and the king brought up to the capital. He was then tried by a specially appointed court, and was condemned and executed (1649), as Archbishop Laud, the author of so many of his troubles, had been before him. He was undoubtedly a martyr to his principles: but those principles had made him, probably without his knowledge, an enemy to his country; and so his opponents, driven to

desperation by his incurable duplicity, and unable any longer to trust his word, gave him no further opportunity of putting those principles into practice. Immediately after this event, the Monarchy was abolished, and a Commonwealth established in its place. This in its turn was followed, after four years, by the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, which lasted until his death in 1658.

8. Liberty of Conscience Partially Secured.—

The religious freedom enjoyed since the outbreak of the war was still further increased, and there was comparatively little that deserved the name of persecution. The Presbyterian form of government continued to be the nominal religion of the State; but with the exception of Roman Catholicism, almost any other was permitted, unless it was found extremely irritating to the general community, or positively dangerous to the security of the Government and the well-being of the nation.

Under the Parliament, the Commonwealth, and the Protectorate, numbers of Episcopalians were unquestionably treated too rigorously—many of the clergy being deprived of their livings, fined, imprisoned and otherwise punished without just cause; but it cannot be denied that not a few of these sufferers were either morally unfit for their sacred duties or were what were then called *Malignants*, i.e., inveterate royalists, who were not content to abide by the issue of the civil conflict and to live as peaceable citizens, but were continually plotting to bring the nation once more under the hated yoke of king and priest, with their arrogant assumption of divine right and pernicious doctrine of passive obedience. It is no wonder that the patience of the parliamentary authorities with some of these conscientious opponents or unscrupulous friends of arbitrary power was some-

times exhausted, and that they dealt out to them a good deal more than either justice or expediency required. With regard to the clergy whom it was thought necessary to deprive of their livings, it must, moreover, be borne in mind that they were not as a rule left altogether to starve, as were their Puritan predecessors, and as would be their Nonconformist successors ; but they were authorised to receive a fifth of their ordinary stipends from their usual sources of income. To save the country from anarchy, severity had also to be exercised in the case of the extreme sectaries, such as the Levellers and Fifth Monarchy men, whose notion of religious liberty was licence to pursue unchecked their subversive schemes of destruction, and whose animosity to those in power sometimes showed itself in ugly deeds as well as angry words.

The people to suffer the most were the *Quakers*, or *Friends* as they are now called, who were the followers of *George Fox*. This remarkable man began his strange career of teaching, preaching, and testifying against the errors and sins of the times about the year 1647, when he was twenty-three years of age. Hearing an inward call to the work, he went hither and thither into various parts of the country, protesting against all formalities of public worship, and calling on people to repent of their sins and give unto God inward and spiritual worship. Fox soon had a considerable number of followers, who not only copied his example in protesting against formalities in the "steeple houses" (as he called the churches), but went much further, and were occasionally guilty of unbecoming and outrageous conduct in the belief that they were doing God's will. Divine service was often interrupted, and the ministers publicly denounced, and behaviour of the most extraordinary kind was some-

times indulged in. *James Nayler*, a landed proprietor near Wakefield, whilst ploughing in his own field, thought he heard the call to leave all and go and proclaim Christ and His kingdom in the heart. Without going home to take leave of his wife and family he at once set out on his mission, and zealously prosecuted his work. His impassioned eloquence drew crowds of admiring hearers, and created intense excitement; but unwonted success turned the enthusiast's brain. "He went so far as to allow his deluded followers to parody the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem, by leading their favourite, seated on an ass, into Bristol, whilst they shouted hosannas to him amidst the excited crowd." Scenes such as these and worse excited the indignation of the people, and stirred up their rulers to take the most repressive measures against the Quakers. Had they been quiet, peaceable folk like their successors, little or nothing perhaps would have been done; but often creating tumult and commotion by the unseemliness of their conduct, they were persecuted with great severity, and not infrequently barbarously maltreated. Their sufferings were so great that Fox, who though frequently indiscreet, bore an excellent character for piety, purity and goodness, made a special appeal on their behalf to Cromwell, and obtained for them some relief. This did not however entirely prevent their being persecuted. Indeed in 1656, after they had refused to take the oath of loyalty to the Government, there were nearly a thousand of these poor people in prison.

Although the circumstances of the times, and the exigencies of his own position, frequently compelled Cromwell to adopt harsh and repressive measures towards the Quakers and others who were a trouble to the community, it is certain that his sympathies were

on the side of liberty ; and that, notwithstanding many provocations to the contrary, he endeavoured to do substantial justice to all. Moreover, his love of liberty and his sympathy for the oppressed were felt not only in his own country but also abroad. He was known as the friend of tyranny's victims everywhere. On more than one occasion he employed the eloquent pen of the noble *John Milton*, and the formidable guns of the redoubtable *Admiral Blake* to secure the freedom of the unhappy subjects of Popish persecution and Mohammedan misrule. Despotism breathed more freely when he had passed away.

9. State of Religion.—Whilst the civil war was raging there was properly no established form of Church government. The Anglican Establishment nominally existed, but its discipline was necessarily in abeyance, and the clergy generally did as they thought best or judged expedient in the matter of rites and ceremonies. During the rule of the Parliament the discipline was still further relaxed, and after the abolition of Episcopacy in 1643 everything was in the utmost confusion. Some of the clergy of Puritan tendencies became Presbyterians, whilst others, being deprived of their positions for malignancy or incompetency and immorality, retired into private life. Those who differed from Episcopacy, being now practically free to pursue their own course, continued to labour for their respective religious interests and the general good of the community. The Presbyterians, as the representatives of the publicly recognised religion of the State, were the most numerous and the most influential. Some of their principal divines were *Richard Baxter*, *Edmund Calamy*, *Antony Burgess*, *Thomas Gataker*, *William Gouge*, *Thomas Manton* and *John Howe*.

The Independents were the next considerable body. Amongst their ministers were *Thomas Goodwin*, *Philip Nye*, *William Bridges*, *David Clarkson* and *John Owen*. Of the laymen who were more or less identified with them the most distinguished were the *Lord Protector*, *Saint John*, *Sir Henry Vane*, and *John Milton*, the literary champion and foreign secretary of the Commonwealth. The Independents seem to have increased rapidly towards the close of this period ; for at the *Savoy Conference* of 1658, there were two hundred ministerial and other delegates from a hundred of their churches.

The Baptists were also numerous, especially in the army, where their influence was increased by the sympathy and assistance of such soldiers as *Harrison*, *Ludlow* and *Hutchinson*. Of their ministers comparatively little is known ; but *Varasor Powell*, *William Kiffin*, *John Canne* and *Hanserd Knollys* seem to have been most active. The Quakers too continued to increase, through the devoted labours of *George Fox*, and the energetic assistance of such enthusiastic helpers as *George Whitehead*, *Edward Burrough*, and *Francis Howgill*. It is estimated that towards the end of the Commonwealth there were in London and district as many as ten thousand adherents of the Society. We read also of erratic and fanatical sects—Antinomians, Familists, Muggletonians, Ranters, Seekers, Levellers and Fifth Monarchy Men ; but, except the two last named, they were insignificant both in numbers and influence ; and there is reason to think that the immoralities ascribed to some of them, if not mere slanders, are much exaggerated.

The spiritual condition of the nation, notwithstanding the crass ignorance of the multitude and the strength of the passions which the commotions of the times excited, was gradually improving. Though convicted of many

errors, and guilty of not a few faults, the Puritan rulers seem to have been sincerely desirous of promoting the intellectual and moral welfare of the people. Education was encouraged amongst all classes, lectures were established, and colleges and schools maintained. Considerable care was taken to supply vacant pulpits with suitable ministers, and to find proper chaplains for the army, and some provision was made for their support. Two committees were appointed: one of "*Triers*," to test the moral and spiritual qualifications of candidates for parochial benefices, and one for the "*Removal of Scandalous Ministers*" whose lives were a disgrace to their profession. By these means, and by the enforcement of strict laws against the desecration of the Sabbath, and the indulgence of profanity, drunkenness, and the open exhibition of vice of all kinds, the outward aspect of society underwent a manifest change for the better, and wickedness was forced to "hide itself in corners". But the repression of natural inclinations was undoubtedly too severe, and had much to do with the shameful reaction which was to follow.

The iconoclastic excesses which marked the period of Puritan ascendancy are also to be deplored. But the Puritan mind was convinced that in matters relating to worship nothing could be indifferent, and that therefore whatever was not directly sanctioned in Scripture was sinful. Church ornaments in the time of Popery had been used in a way scarcely distinguishable from idolatry. It was deemed a duty to destroy them as "*Monuments of Superstition*," and many painted windows and other harmless embellishments shared in the wreck. It is tolerably certain, however, that much ruin was wrought by godless roughs who neither professed nor practised Puritan principles, and who are always ready in times

of disorder for wanton mischief. As to the hostility of the Puritans for religious anniversaries, it grew out of their strong conviction that the Lord's Day as representing the original Sabbath was of divine and universal obligation. Popery and Prelacy had subordinated the Sabbath to festivals which were of ecclesiastical, that is of human, appointment; and the Puritan protest had been twice replied to by the authoritative publication of the *Book of Sports*; and however we may disapprove of the attempt to suppress Christmas and Easter, we must recognise the fact that it was provoked by repeated Prelatist attempts to exalt these merely human institutions above that which was confessedly divine.

CHAPTER V

RESTORATION OF EPISCOPAL RULE

FROM THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF EPISCOPACY TO THE PASSING OF THE TOLERATION ACT

1660-1689

1. **Recall of Charles II.**—After the death of Cromwell in 1658, a change became inevitable. The Royalists could not forget the execution of the king; the Episcopalians mourned over the abasement of the Church; the Presbyterians resented the loss of their power; the Scots thought with bitterness of the neglect of the Covenant; whilst the people fretted under the restraints imposed on them by the Puritans. As soon therefore as the conqueror of Naseby, Dunbar, and Worcester had passed away, and the stern hand of his authority was gone for ever, a movement was set on foot to recall the prince who had already been crowned king by the Scots at Scone (1651). The end in view was speedily attained. Richard Cromwell had neither the ambition nor the ability of his father; and on seeing the position of affairs, he laid down the reins of government. After a short period of restless and anxious uncertainty, negotiations were opened up with the king; and through the influence of General Monk, the Parliament sent over to Holland a formal invitation for his return. Charles thereupon set sail, and entered his capital on 29th May,

1660, amidst the joyous acclamations of his repentant subjects.

2. Re-establishment of Episcopacy.—As soon as the new sovereign had assumed his royal authority, Episcopacy was again recognised as the religion of the State, and the bishops and clergy resumed their functions. Even those of the latter who had been deprived of their livings for incompetence, worldliness, or immorality, were reinstated in their positions. It was enough that they had occupied them before; and no inquiry was made as to their present fitness. The Presbyterians, who had favoured the restoration, expected that some changes would be made in the Liturgy and ceremonies of the Church, which would enable them to retain their places in it; or at least, that a little regard would be had for their scruples, and some amount of Toleration extended to them, if unfortunately they should find themselves unable to conform to its requirements. This, at any rate, was the substance of the promises made to them at Breda. But they were speedily reminded how vain it is to put confidence in the word of princes. They were to be bitterly disappointed in both directions. If the king intended any material modifications in the ritual and discipline of the Church, the bishops did not; and these took care that there should be nothing like a patient and fair consideration shown to the objections of their late opponents.

In response, however, to the application of the Presbyterian ministers, a conference was held at the *Savoy Palace* to discuss terms of comprehension (15th April, 1661); but like the Hampton Court Conference, it was a mere farce, being called to save appearances; and intended rather to drive or keep men out of the Re-established

Church than to make it easy for them to remain or enter into it.¹ The ministers were requested to state their objections to the Prayer-book in writing ; but when they complied and presented their statement, they were treated with contumely, and told by the bishops that, as no alterations were actually necessary, none could be made. Subsequently, however, Convocation did make a few slight changes ; but from the Puritan point of view, they were mostly for the worse, and if anything, made the Prayer-book still more objectionable.

3. Repression of Nonconformity by persecution followed immediately upon the rejection of the ministers' appeal for the reform of the Church services. Indeed it had already begun. As the old laws against the malcontents had not been abrogated by the consent of the king, they were still considered to be in force. Puritans, who refused to conform to the rites and ceremonies of the Church, were haled before the magistrates and punished as of yore. But these laws not being deemed sufficient for the purpose, new and more stringent statutes were

¹ Defenders of the Established Church like the Rev. C. A. Lane say "that the large number and radical character of the proposed alterations make it probable that the Puritans did not really desire union on any terms ; as they must have known that there was no hope of their being accepted, inasmuch as the Church was again in the ascendancy with the nation at its back". The proposal was indeed visionary : but does not the fact that Convocation was only willing to make "changes mostly of a minor character, such as the substitution of modern for obsolete words," show that the obstinacy was on the other side, and that the whole thing was no better than a sham ? The plain fact is that absolutism being once more in the ascendant, the majority of the court and clerical party imagined that their triumph would be permanent, and thought of little but revenge on those who had fought and laboured strenuously, if not always wisely, for something approaching civil and religious liberty.

successively passed by the Cavalier Legislature, which went by the name of the *Pension Parliament*, because so many of its members were in the pay of Charles II. and his astute ally, Louis XIV. of France.

These Acts of Repression were as follows:—In 1661 the *Corporation Act*, which obliged every office holder in any municipal body to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper after the manner of the Church of England, to acknowledge the king's supremacy in Church as well as State, and to swear not to take up arms against him for any reason whatsoever; in 1662 the *Act of Uniformity*, which silenced the ministers and deprived of their livings all who would not conform to everything contained in the Book of Common Prayer; in 1664 the *Conventicle Act*, which forbade any Nonconformist to hold a meeting where more than five were present, besides the members of his own family; in 1665 the *Five Mile Act*, which prohibited every Nonconformist minister from coming within five miles of any corporate town which sent members to Parliament, or any place where he had once exercised the functions of his sacred office, except on condition of swearing not to resist any possible assumptions of despotism; in 1670 the *Extension of the Conventicle Act*, which encouraged informers and increased the penalties for its infraction; and in 1673 the *Test Act*, which, under pretext of securing the State against Popery, denied all civil, naval, and military employment under Government to Nonconformists.

4. **Nonconformist Confessors.**—These vexatious and iniquitous laws pressed heavily on the unfortunate persons against whom they were directed. As soon as the first was promulgated, hundreds of brave and

patriotic men, who would not consent to declare themselves the unresisting slaves of monarchy, or who declined to degrade the Saviour's ordinance of love and mercy by making it the means of retaining their employment, found that employment taken from them. Similarly, when the time came for the Act of Uniformity to take effect on that Black St. Bartholomew's Day, 24th August, 1662, nearly two thousand ministers (many of whom were not only thoroughly loyal, but had been most active in securing the return of the fugitive king) resigned their livings, and threw themselves on the world rather than act contrary to the light of their knowledge and the dictates of their conscience. Amongst the most notable of these worthy confessors were the following :—

PRESBYTERIANS. *Thomas Gouge*, M.A. of Eton and King's College, Cambridge, who was rector of St. Sepulchre's, London, and was noted especially for his philanthropy to the poor in Wales : *William Jenkyn*, M.A. of St. John's College, Cambridge, and Christ Church, Newgate, who was persecuted in the time of the Commonwealth, and who died in prison, 1685 : *Thomas Manton*, D.D., one of the Savoy Commissioners and amongst the most learned and practical of the Puritan writers ; *John Angier*, of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and Denton, a saintly character, gentle and patient under persecution and greatly respected by all : *William Bates*, D.D. of St. Dunstan's, one of the best orators of his day, a favourite of Charles II., who might have had any bishopric in the kingdom ; he worked hard to promote Comprehension, was one of the lecturers at Salter's Hall, and spent the latter part of his life as pastor of Mare Street Chapel, Hackney : *Oliver Heywood*, B.D. of Trinity College, Cambridge, a most excellent character, who in his life

of holiness and usefulness was said to have particularly exemplified Baxter's "*Reformed Pastor*": *John Howe*, M.A. of Christ's College, Cambridge, and Torrington, one of Cromwell's chaplains—a most disinterested, devout, and godly man, to whom the Protector once said: "You have obtained many favours for others, when will you seek for something for yourself?": *Matthew Sylvester*, the "friend of Baxter," and his colleague in the pastorate of the church in Charter House Square: *Richard Baxter*, M.A. of Wadham College, Oxford, and Kidderminster, the celebrated preacher, author and controversialist, the voluminous writer of theological and practical books, amongst the most widely known of which are the "*Reformed Pastor*," and "*Saints' Everlasting Rest*": *Stephen Charnock*, B.D. of Clare Hall, Cambridge and Mortlake, "calm, gentle, kind and good," the tutor and friend of Archbishop Tillotson: *Thomas Doolittle*, M.A. of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, and St. Alphage, London Wall; after 1662 he kept a boarding school, then opened a meeting house near Bunhill Fields, and in 1670 established his celebrated academy at Islington, and ministered during the latter part of his life to his church in Monkswell Street: and the saintly *John Flavel*, B.A. of University College, Oxford, and Dartmouth, who endeavoured to promote a union of Presbyterians and Independents, and was the author of many sermons of a practical and devotional character.

INDEPENDENTS. *Thomas Goodwin*, D.D. of Christ's College, Cambridge, who fled from Laud's persecution to Holland, became pastor at Arnheim, then settled in London, was member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, and one of Cromwell's Triers and President of his own college: *Theophilus Gale*, M.A. of Magdalen College, Oxford, and preacher at Winchester; he went

to France for two years, and afterwards established an academy at Newington Green: *Philip Nye*, M.A. of Magdalen Hall, Oxford, who was one of the Parliament's Commissioners to the Scots, took an active part in the Westminster Assembly, and was chief spokesman in the representative meeting of Independents held at the Savoy in 1658: *John Owen*, D.D. of Queen's College, Oxford, the most distinguished Independent, who refused submission to Laud, went to Scotland as chaplain to Cromwell, became Vice-Chancellor of his university, was befriended by Clarendon and favoured by Charles II. and the Duke of York, yet was persecuted for his Nonconformity—the author of “*A Display of Calvinism*” and “*Meditations on the Glory of Christ*”: *Joseph Caryl*, A.M. of Exeter College, Oxford, and Lincoln's Inn; who was a member of the Westminster Assembly, one of the Triers, commissioner to the king in the Isle of Wight, and pastor of the church at St. Magnus near London Bridge.

BAPTISTS. *Francis Bampfield*, M.A. of Wadham College, Oxford, whose painful vicissitudes and manifold sufferings evoked much sympathy, and who finally died in Newgate prison: and *John Tombes*, B.D. of Magdalen College, Oxford, and Leominster, who discoursed on baptism to the Westminster Assembly, and afterwards held a public discussion and wrote much on the same subject.

5. Under the heel of the oppressor.—The sufferings of these faithful fathers and founders of modern Nonconformity were very great. Particular care seems to have been taken to make them realize the determination of their enemies to crush them. It was soon made evident they were to receive no consideration. The day

of their ejection was studiously fixed so as to exclude them from receiving the tithes due to them; and unlike the Episcopal clergymen who were deprived in the time of the Commonwealth, they obtained no pecuniary assistance whatever from those who had thrust them forth. Moreover, although the Government was firmly established, and any opposition to it on their part (even if it had been seriously intended) could not have been particularly harmful—they were treated as dangerous conspirators, harried from place to place, and prevented from ministering in any public way to the spiritual necessities of the people. Only too frequently also, when they and their little flocks ventured to meet together to worship God in secret, they were discovered, dragged before the magistrates, and fined and imprisoned; and not infrequently they were otherwise most shamefully maltreated. It was only when some of the persecuted pastors, full of pity for the suffering people of London, in the time of the plague, ventured into the death-stricken city to minister to them the consolations of religion, that they were left for a time in peace. Instances of suffering are numerous. Three only must here suffice.

Richard Baxter had his full share of persecution. He was imprisoned for preaching to his neighbours in his own house at Acton, and for refusing to take the oath of supremacy, and again for preaching at a Thursday Lecture. On another occasion, Baxter was surprised at home by a party of constables, who took him out of bed, although he had been confined to it for some time. They would have carried him to prison forthwith, if they had not been prevented by his physician, who declared that it would be murder; so they contented themselves with rifling the place, and selling the bed from under him. Again they seized him in his old age, when

he was almost bedridden, and carried him off to prison. There he would undoubtedly have died, if his friends had not procured his release by becoming surety for him in a bond for four hundred pounds. He was persecuted thus and driven about for twelve years; during which period, he says, he was often weary of trying to keep his door shut against persons who came to distrain upon his goods.

Thomas Delaune was a less known man—a Baptist printer, who ventured to print a "*Plea for the Nonconformists*," in reply to a public challenge by an Anglican clergyman. But before the book was published, he was apprehended and shut up in Newgate. Not being able to pay the heavy fine inflicted on him, he remained there fifteen months, dependent on charity, and suffering all the while great hardship. He at length sank under his miseries in the dreadful gaol, as did also his wife, who with two small children had come to share his sufferings.

John Bunyan, "the immortal dreamer," was also a prisoner for Nonconformity in this reign. He was confined in Bedford gaol immediately after the Restoration as a suspected character, and kept in prison until the year 1672, when the first *Declaration of Indulgence* was issued. He was then released, and was the first amongst his brethren to obtain a licence for preaching. On the recall of the Indulgence, however, he was arrested once more on a warrant signed by no fewer than thirteen magistrates, and again committed to Bedford gaol. It was during this second imprisonment that he wrote the first part of his memorable work, "*The Pilgrim's Progress*".

6. Toleration attempted.—During the reign of the

“Merry Monarch,” who was for “peace at any price and pleasure under all circumstances,” various attempts were made to adjust the differences between the Episcopalians and the Protestant Nonconformists; but they all failed, chiefly through the arrogance and unyielding disposition of the former. It was much the same with the question of Toleration. After the first feelings of revenge for the wrongs done to his father and the humiliations inflicted on himself were satisfied, Charles wearied of persecution, and would fain have stopped it. He wished, moreover, to obtain relief for the Roman Catholics, with whom he was suspected of being in secret communion. He endeavoured therefore to obtain legal toleration for those outside the Establishment. Parliament proving unwilling, he exercised the dispensing power, supposed to be inherent in his royal person, and issued in 1672 his *Declaration of Indulgence*; but as this provoked much opposition, it was withdrawn in the following year, and the persecution continued.

7. **Judge Jeffreys and Richard Baxter.**—The persecution was carried on in the first year of the short reign of James II. The venerable Richard Baxter was again amongst the victims. He was brought in a weak and feeble condition before the notorious Jeffreys for alleged “sedition” in a very harmless phrase in his *Paraphrase on the New Testament*. Through his counsel he asked for time to prepare his defence; but this unjust and unmerciful judge replied: “I would not give him a moment’s time to save his life. Yonder stands Oates [the universally execrated perjurer] in the pillory; and if Baxter stood on the other side I would say two of the greatest rogues in England stood there.” The aged prisoner was of course found guilty; and was

thereupon committed to gaol, where he lay for two years.

8. **Extent of the Persecution.**—It is very difficult to get exact statistics as to the extent of the persecution ; but it seems to have been very general, and the sufferings of the Nonconformists were correspondingly great. Delaune is said to have been one of 8000 persons who perished in the abominable and unwholesome prisons of the period ; and during the same time—within three years—property to the value of two millions sterling was wrung by fine and confiscation from the numerous victims. One Jeremy White, moreover, is declared to have collected a list of 60,000 people who had suffered for Dissent between the Restoration and the Revolution. These numbers may be somewhat exaggerated ; and yet it is probable that they are not very far from the truth. The records of the Friends alone testify to a vast amount of suffering. “The severity and extent of their sufferings,” says William Beck, “is shown by the fact that during the twenty-five years of Charles the Second’s reign 13,562 Friends were imprisoned in various parts of England, 198 were transported as slaves beyond seas, and 338 died in prison or of wounds received in violent assaults at their meetings.” Some 400 of these were incarcerated for not taking the oath of allegiance. But they were subsequently released by the king, at the instance of a Friend named Richard Carver who had once carried his majesty to shore, when the ship in which he was escaping to France stranded in shallow waters. The Friends were certainly the greatest sufferers, as in the preceding period ; but, as they formed a part only of the Nonconformists, it is not difficult to see that far greater numbers must have suffered for their fidelity to conscience.

The persecution extended itself to the other parts of the United Kingdom. In Scotland it was particularly severe, owing to the determined attitude of the Covenanters. These deeply religious men, who were mostly of the humbler classes, held on to the Covenant when it had been burned in England, and discarded by their own countrymen; and even after it had been declared treason to take it. They followed faithfully their ejected ministers, listened respectfully to their exhortations, and joined with them in their prayers on the sides of the bleak and barren mountains, or in the depths of the more remote and secluded valleys. At length, becoming desperate they broke out into open rebellion. They were, however, easily defeated by the Duke of Monmouth at the battle of Bothwell Bridge in 1679; and afterwards endured great privations and sufferings, several of their most devoted ministers being put to death.¹

9. Increase of Nonconformists.—It has often happened in the history of the Christian Church that persecution, when it has stopped short of total extermination, has defeated its own ends; and it was so in this case. The Puritan clergy driven out of the Establishment often ministered to the same people, though under different circumstances; and the Separatists, who had already left it, being scattered up and down the country, reached in various ways a larger number of people. Both classes, who were now alike known under the name of Nonconformists, were moreover composed of men of strong convictions, full of earnestness and zeal for the cause they held dear; and the energy and fire of their preaching brought them many converts. Then too, the cruel and

¹ It is computed that under the Stuarts nearly 20,000 of the brave Covenanters were slain in battle or otherwise put to death.

unjust manner in which they were treated, and their patience under suffering won the sympathy of many, who were thereby led to consider more favourably the principles they so earnestly and persistently advocated under such untoward circumstances.

Before the passing of the Act of Uniformity, and the subsequent severe measures taken against the Nonconformists, they were few in number as compared with the rest of the population; but afterwards, and when Episcopal persecution was still doing its evil work, their numbers largely increased. It is said that some hundreds of churches date their existence from this period, and that within a year of the Declaration of Indulgence by Charles II., not less than 3500 licences to preach and hold meetings were granted. Not counting Baptists or Independents, there were licensed Presbyterian meetings in no fewer than 1076 towns and villages, representing every county in England and six counties in Wales. It was at this time too, that the distinguishing principles and characteristics of the various denominations then in existence became fixed. Puritanism had indeed fallen; but it was only to rest and gather strength, in order to rise again ere long to battle and to victory.

10. After Sedgemoor.—James II. began his reign by openly avowing himself to be a Roman Catholic, and was not long before he showed himself determined to favour and advance in every way the interests of that religion. It is not surprising therefore that the persecuted Nonconformists of the western counties regarded with favour the ill-judged attempt of the Duke of Monmouth to advance at once the Protestant cause and his own claims to the throne (1685). Many of them fell at Sedgemoor; many were butchered by Colonel Kirke and his “lambs”; and

a still larger number fell victims to the un pitying revenge of the king, and his ready tool Jeffreys, in the "Bloody Assize" which followed. There was scarcely a market town in the west country but had its Nonconformist victims. Perhaps the most memorable names are *John Hickes*, one of the evicted in 1662, whose personal appeal to Charles II. had much to do with the indulgence of 1672; the venerable *Lady Alice Lisle* who was beheaded at Winchester for giving him shelter (as she had done to many a Royalist refugee during the civil war); and *Elizabeth Gaunt*, a pious Baptist, who was actually burnt to death for befriending another person in like manner.

11. Toleration won.—Even James, ere long, became sensible of the horror excited by these proceedings; and he resolved to grant Toleration to the Nonconformists. He did this chiefly, however, because without it he could not introduce his Popish friends into positions of trust, responsibility, and power. He did not wait to bring this about legally, but induced his servile judges to decide that he could dispense with the penal laws in particular cases; and he thereupon proceeded to infringe the provisions of the Test Act and the Act of Uniformity, by conferring offices in Church and State on persons of his own persuasion. The following year, 1687, he published the *Second Declaration of Indulgence*; and thenceforth persecution of the English Nonconformists ceased. Renwick, the last of the Scottish martyrs, was hanged February 18th, 1688.

On the other hand, the Episcopalians were now beginning to feel the inconvenience and force of arbitrary power. The ultra-loyalist universities and the hitherto most obedient clergy, in spite of their avowed principle of non-resistance to kingly authority, protested against

the Declaration; and many of the latter positively declined to read it from their pulpits as ordered, after it had been confirmed and issued a second time. They had been already angered and alarmed by the appointment of a hostile commission to inquire into the late harsh treatment of the Nonconformists; and they were now exasperated and terrified by the arrest of the seven bishops, who had remonstrated against the royal command. Indeed general consternation prevailed, quickly followed, however, by a determination to resist the arbitrary exercise of the monarch's will. Even the Nonconformists (who might have been expected after all their sufferings to quietly rest in the liberty unexpectedly granted them), seeing through the designs of the king, and apprehensive of the result in the actual re-establishment of Popery, and the consequent ultimate loss of their religious freedom, joined heartily with what was now become the Patriotic party, and did their best to further the coming revolution.

Events hastened rapidly to a crisis. The bishops were brought from the Tower to Westminster Hall attended by a vast concourse; and after a trial of ten hours they were acquitted, to the intense joy of the people, whose loud shouts of triumphant gladness rent the air, and struck terror into the hearts of their would-be oppressors. The army encamped on Blackheath shared in the general satisfaction, in spite of the numbers of Papists from Ireland and elsewhere who had been drafted into it, to help to carry out the traitorous designs of the king. James made spasmodic efforts to stem the rising tide of rebellion; but it was all in vain. *William, Prince of Orange*, on whom the people's hopes were set, landed in Tor-Bay on November 5th, 1688, and made an unopposed march on London. There

as James had in the meantime fled to France, William and Mary, his consort, were proclaimed king and queen on the 13th February following.

Shortly afterwards the *Toleration Act* passed the Houses of Parliament and received the royal assent (1689). This wise, necessary and eagerly-looked-for measure gave to the Nonconformists a legal existence. It exempted them from the penalties of the statutes passed by the Restoration Parliament, which had pressed so heavily upon them; and it enabled their ministers to conduct public worship after their own fashion, provided they acknowledged allegiance to the Government, and subscribed the Doctrinal Articles of the Church of England.

CHAPTER VI

TOLERATION ALMOST LOST

FROM THE GRANTING OF TOLERATION TO THE PASSING OF THE SCHISM BILL

1689-1714

1. Limitations of Toleration. — This celebrated statute, whilst it sounded the death knell of absolute repression, and crippled the power of Church and State to cruelly punish, and vexatiously harry and distress the Nonconformists (or Dissenters as they were now often called), did not entirely destroy it. The act was limited in its operation. Besides the condition of subscribing to the Doctrinal Articles of the Church, there were several others, the infraction of which meant the withdrawal of liberty, and further persecution and trouble. Dissenters were bound to pay Tithes and Church rates, and perform various parochial duties which ought not to have been necessarily incumbent upon them. All gatherings for worship or meetings for other purposes were to be with open doors; ministers were to take the oath and subscribe the Articles (except the thirty-fourth, thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth—those relating to Tradition, the Homilies, and Consecration) before a general or quarter session, and pay sixpence to have their names registered; every person going to a Dissenting place of worship could be called on at any moment to take the

oath, or be prosecuted as a Popish recusant ; no congregation was permitted to assemble, until their place of worship had been certified before the bishop of the diocese, his archdeacon or a justice of the peace,¹ and all Papists and Unitarians were excluded from the benefit of the acts. But notwithstanding these limitations, the Nonconformists were generally satisfied with the victory they had achieved ; and possibly there were but a few amongst them who began to think of entering on a further stage of the conflict—the struggle for the removal of their other disabilities, and the ultimate possession of complete religious equality.

2. Failure of the Comprehension Bill.—At the same time as the question of Toleration was settled, an attempt was made to reform the Church Establishment, so as to include most of the Nonconformists within its pale ; and apparently with every chance of success, for both the king and the more eminent of the Episcopal authorities were very favourable to it. A Bill to facilitate the change was introduced into the House of Lords and duly passed. But when it reached the Commons, it was allowed to lie on the table without discussion ; and was at length referred to Convocation for its consideration. The commission then appointed laboured zealously for six weeks ; and suggested a reform of the Ecclesiastical Courts, as well as many important alterations of the Canons and Liturgy, which would have removed most of the causes of Dissent. But when these suggestions were brought before the clergy in the Lower House (who were far more conservative than the bishops in the Upper

¹ Within eleven years from the passing of the Toleration Act no less than 2418 places were licensed for Nonconformist worship, though many of them were doubtless of a temporary character.

House¹), they disregarded all the sacrifices the Nonconformists had recently made for the preservation of the liberties of the Establishment as well as of their own, and practically decided to make no change on their behalf. The Church System therefore was to continue unreformed, and Nonconformity was perpetuated.

3. Position of the Nonconformists.—During the years immediately preceding the Revolution some of their ablest and most remarkable men had passed away, as *Milton, Manton, Goodwin, Owen* and *Bunyan*; yet the Nonconformists maintained the position they had won in the estimation and love of many of the common people, and they were not without considerable influence amongst the upper classes of society. Not a few were well educated and highly cultivated men, and distinguished not only for their spiritual, but also for their intellectual attainments. They had, moreover, amongst their hearers and friends various members of the aristocracy, and several of the ministers and others who were much in favour with their deliverer William III.

The most highly cultured Nonconformists were of course the elders, who had the privilege of studying at the universities before the passing of the Act of Uniformity. Afterwards, when the universities were closed against them, those who dissented from the

¹At that time the ejection of the nonjuring bishops gave the Upper House a Liberal majority. An overwhelming majority of the Parochial Clergy were Tory and Jacobite, and only retained their benefices because they were not honest enough to be Nonjurors. Even among the Whig politicians—the Liberal party of that day—there were many who distrusted “Comprehension”; fearing that the number of Dissenters would be so much reduced thereby, that it would be easy for the first reactionary government to withdraw Toleration from the residue.

National Church were obliged to seek learning elsewhere. To meet this want, therefore, as well as to provide a maintenance for themselves, several of the ministers established academies of their own. Some of these were greatly appreciated, and numerous attended by students from all classes of society. In them their younger brethren were educated for the ministry; and thus the instruction of their followers in religious knowledge and Free Church principles was carried on. There are records of at least twenty such "academies" or "seminaries" existing before the year 1700. Two of them, after numerous transformations and developments, are still flourishing under the names of "New College," London, and "The Presbyterian College," Carmarthen. The latter, when located at Gloucester (about 1711), had among its students two, who conformed to the Established Church, and became eminent—*T. Secker*, Archbishop of Canterbury, and *Joseph Butler* of the "*Analogy*".

The Independents of the Civil War and Commonwealth, like the Quakers, affirmed the right of every Christian to teach the ignorant and exhort the negligent. Cromwell and many of his officers were lay preachers. This was displeasing to the Presbyterians, whose views on the subject gained ground for a time. Toward the end of the century a keen controversy arose out of the action of *Richard Davis* of Rothwell (Independent), who organised a staff of lay preachers for evangelical work. When Toleration was granted, and the meeting houses were freely thrown open to the public, large congregations were gathered together. Yet it can scarcely be said that Nonconformity became popular with the masses. Comparatively few cared much for religion of any sort beyond the merest formality. Many still remembered with bitterness the strictness and severity

of Puritan rule; and those of the clergy, who were jealous of the moral influence exerted by the Nonconformist ministers, found it easy to stir up "lewd fellows of the baser sort" among the populace, who were ready to indulge in abuse and petty persecution whenever an opportunity was afforded them.

4. Agitation against Occasional Conformity.—

This period was noted for the earnest and kindly endeavours of intellectual and high-minded Churchmen like *Tillotson*, *Tenison*, *Burnet*, and others, to bring over the Nonconformists by calm and dispassionate argument or by friendly and affectionate persuasion. But on the other hand, many of the Episcopalians were as bigoted and lofty in their ideas as ever, and thought Nonconformists unworthy of any better arguments than restraint and compulsion. Freedom was in their view the exclusive prerogative of their own party; and they thought it intolerable that it should be shared by others. Before Queen Mary's death in 1694, various circumstances occurred to excite the anger of the hostile clergy; and in 1697, an event took place which excited them still more, and afforded the opportunity they desired. In order to secure or retain municipal offices, some of the Dissenters, whilst worshipping generally in their own meeting houses, went occasionally to church and there partook of the Sacrament after the Episcopal fashion according to the law. This vexed the clerical party, who regarded it as a moral evasion of the statute, as indeed it was; but, as the persons who acted thus were within their legal rights, little was actually said. When, however, Sir Humphrey Edwin, on being elected Lord Mayor of London, carried the regalia of his office to the Congregational Church at Pinner's Hall, of which he was a

member, a great storm arose ; and it was determined to put a stop to Occasional Conformity altogether. The question was agitated amongst the High Church party and their friends for some years, and a feeling of hostility to Dissenters was sedulously fostered amongst the people. Great bitterness prevailed ; and, if the clerical faction could have had their way, Toleration would have been at once withdrawn.

Appropriately and aptly interpreting this intolerant feeling, *Daniel Defoe* issued his celebrated "*Shortest Way with Dissenters*" ; in which, in terse and forcible language, he recommended their opponents to deal with them as quickly and as effectively as the Papists of France did with their Protestant fellow-countrymen. So cleverly was the satire written, that the High Church party (invariably the advocates of high-handed repression where Protestant Nonconformists were concerned) were greatly delighted, and applauded it to the skies. When, however, it appeared that a Dissenter had written the book, their rage knew no bounds ; and they rested not until the author was forced to discover himself. The case was brought before the House of Commons ; Defoe was prosecuted for malicious libel, and sentenced to pay 200 marks, to stand three times in the pillory, to be imprisoned during her majesty Queen Anne's pleasure, and to find securities for his good behaviour for three years. The populace, however, greeted him with shouts of applause ; and instead of pelting him with garbage, as was expected, they hung garlands of flowers on the pillory, and plentifully supplied him with refreshments.

A bill for the prevention of Occasional Conformity had been in the meantime brought into the House of Commons by the members for the universities of Oxford and Cambridge (1702) ; but, on being sent up to the Lords, various

modifications were made, and it was ultimately rejected. Another attempt, in the following year, failed, largely through the action of the bishops who had supported William III. and had no sympathy with such a reactionary measure. Yet once more it was introduced (1704), and its clerical advocates determined that it should pass. They were, however, disappointed. Some of their own friends deserted them. It was again rejected, and not heard of for seven years.

5. Passage of the Occasional Conformity Bill.—

During this period another agitation had taken place, and circumstances had transpired which rendered the passage of the measure a much more easy task. *Dr. Drake* had furiously attacked the queen's ministers and others, who had contributed to the defeat of these various attempts to depress and injure the Dissenters ; and he had raised the foolish but powerful cry of the "Church in danger". He was zealously seconded by *Rev. Henry Sacheverell*, who soon became notorious for the violence of his opposition to those who, while refusing entire conformity, dared to claim some portion of the right of citizenship which he himself enjoyed.

This High Church partisan preached in St. Paul's Cathedral a sermon on "false brethren," in which he indulged in most scurrilous abuse of the Dissenters and their supporters. For this he was impeached, tried in Westminster Hall, and convicted. But, as he had anticipated, the prejudiced populace sympathised with him ; and when he was sentenced to three years' suspension, they went perfectly mad with excitement. Sacheverell made a progress throughout England, and was escorted everywhere in town and country by enthusiastic crowds, who shouted themselves hoarse with pæans of praise,

as if the man had done some noble deed of charity or patriotism for which they could not pay him sufficient honour. In London the mob proceeded to express its indignation against the Dissenters, by pulling down their meeting houses, and making bonfires of the fittings. In this way some of the principal chapels in the metropolis were destroyed.

On the wave of popular prejudice and passion thus created, the Occasional Conformity Bill was again introduced. A change of ministry having taken place, the Coalition Government, then in power, found little difficulty in getting the measure through its various stages. It was quickly disposed of, and speedily received the royal assent. Henceforth it was impossible for any Dissenter to hold any office or place of trust or profit under Government or in any corporation, if he should be found in any meeting for divine worship in which the Liturgy was not used, and where there were more than ten persons present besides the members of the family. When this Act came into force therefore, those who happened to hold these positions either resigned them, or like Sir Thomas Abney, ceased to attend Dissenting places of worship, and contented themselves with devotions in their own homes.

6. The Schism Bill.—The measure which had thus been passed was undoubtedly a first step towards the abolition of the Toleration Act; that about to be proposed was the next, and a much more decided one. The Occasional Conformity Act affected a few only of the Dissenters, and those were of the more wealthy, and influential classes chiefly among the Presbyterians; but the Schism Bill concerned all, as it had regard to the education of their children, and the preparation of their

young men for the ministry. It struck at the roots of their very existence as separate communities ; and was intended so to do. The clerical party saw that the schools and academies of Nonconformity were its sustenance and strength, and they resolved accordingly on their destruction. They were, moreover, aided and abetted in their determination by the Jacobite reactionary politicians, who knew perfectly well that the Dissenters stood in the way of their bringing in the Pretender and setting him on the throne. The Schism Bill was the result of their joint convictions and desires. By its provisions “ No person could keep any public or private school, or teach or instruct as tutor or schoolmaster, who had not subscribed a declaration of conformity to the Established Church, and obtained from the bishop of the diocese in which he resided a licence to teach. No licence was to be granted unless the applicant could produce a certificate that he had received the sacrament according to the rites of the Church in the preceding year. If he taught without a licence he was to be imprisoned without bail for three months.” The measure provoked strenuous opposition ; but it was, nevertheless, forced through both Houses of Parliament, and signed with alacrity by Queen Anne, the last reigning representative of a liberty-hating race.

7. Thomas Bradbury and Bishop Burnet.—The new Act was to have come into force on Sunday, August 1st, 1714 ; but Providence ordered it otherwise. Great concern was in the meanwhile manifested by the people who were expected to be its victims. On the morning of that day, as he was on his way through Smithfield to conduct the usual Sabbath service, *Thomas Bradbury*, the bold and eccentric minister of Fetter Lane

Congregational Chapel, is said to have met the liberal and kind-hearted *Bishop Burnet*. He must have looked unusually thoughtful and grave, for his Lordship, with whom he was on intimate terms, asked him why he appeared so troubled. "I was wondering," replied the minister, "whether in the coming persecution I should have the constancy and resolution of the martyrs who are deposited in this place." To console him, the bishop mentioned that the queen had been given over by her physicians, and was apparently at the point of death. He promised, moreover, to give him the earliest intelligence of the expected event; and arranged to send a messenger, who, if he found the minister in the pulpit, would go into the gallery and drop a handkerchief. The queen died that morning; the messenger duly arrived, and gave the sign. The preacher made no immediate reference to the event; but in his prayer thanked God for the delivery of the nation, and prayed for his majesty George I. and the House of Hanover. He then asked the congregation to join with him in singing part of a metrical version of the eighty-ninth psalm. Under the new dynasty the Schism Act was not enforced; and a few years later, was quietly repealed.

8. **Free Church Organisations.**—The Dissenters during this period had undoubtedly a somewhat checkered experience as regards their treatment by others: sympathy became indifference, favour turned to disfavour, and friendship passed into bitter animosity. It was with difficulty they retained the priceless boon of Religious Toleration, to which they had looked forward with so much eagerness and hope. At first, their numbers grew; but the increase was not steadily maintained, and in some cases, there was a considerable falling off.

Their popularity declined as their difficulties and disabilities were multiplied; comparatively few were then attracted to their communities, and many left them to rejoin the ranks of the Establishment. Still the various sections of Free Churchmen made some progress, and mostly continued to gradually develop and consolidate their respective organisations. As yet there was much isolation and little union amongst them, but they were beginning to see the value of united action as regards their individual and common interests. On the accession of Queen Anne in 1702 for instance, the Presbyterians, the Independents and the Baptists waited on her majesty and presented her with an address.

The *Friends* or *Quakers* seem to have been the most active and enterprising, and considerable numbers were added to their society by the zealous and untiring efforts of such men as *For*, *Barclay*, *Whitehead* and *Penn*, and their many devoted followers. The first two died early in the period; but, as long as life lasted, they were indefatigable in their endeavours to propagate their doctrines and to benefit humanity by deeds of love and mercy. It is recorded that in the years 1688 and 1689 no less than 121 temporary places of worship and 108 permanent ones were erected. They continued too their sturdy opposition to unjust laws, and especially to the imposition of Church rates. The amount of their losses in the year 1703 for refusing to pay the latter was reckoned at £4200, and in the same year there were forty-eight persons in prison, of whom five died.

The *Baptists* made but little progress as regards numbers, but they appear to have paid some attention to organisation. Soon after the passing of the Toleration Act, they held a general assembly of their churches in London at the invitation of their leaders (*Kiffin*, *Knollys*,

Keach and others). This was attended by more than a hundred delegates from various parts of the country. It was then agreed to raise a fund for educational and evangelistic purposes, and for the support of the ministry in poor districts. Consideration was also given to the question of ordination, and other matters connected with the regulation and discipline of the churches. It was the custom also for their ministers to meet once a month for the discussion of denominational affairs.

The *Presbyterians* and *Independents* continued for some time to be the most numerous and influential bodies of Dissenters. In the early days of Nonconformity, especially during the Long Parliament, there had been much rivalry between the two denominations. But a common distress awakened mutual sympathy, and theories of Church organisation appeared of less importance. On the failure of the Comprehension Scheme, it seemed hopeless for Dissenters to think any longer of corporate connection with the Established Church. Some of the ministers in these two communities, however, thought it possible that there might be a substantial union among themselves. Negotiations to that end were set on foot, and the ministers threw themselves with great ardour into the cause. As a result, arrangements were satisfactorily completed; and the scheme of union was gladly accepted in various parts of the country.

The arrangements, however, did not last very long. Although the laymen entered heartily into the arrangement, it was a union managed by the ministers only; and these soon began to disagree, not now on ecclesiastical, but on theological subjects. The controversy was occasioned by some of the Independents advocating high Calvinistic opinions, and it continued with great bitterness for several years. In the heat of it, the Indepen-

dents denounced the Presbyterians as Arminians and Socinians ; whilst they, on the other hand, charged their opponents with being Antinomians. Matters came to a crisis in 1694, when an open rupture took place, and the disappointing union was dissolved. But from that time the Presbyterians in England began, from various causes, steadily to decrease in numbers, and to decline as a separate organisation. Some of them rejoined the Establishment ; others became Independents, not merely individuals, but whole congregations ; and others again adopted first Arian and then Socinian opinions, and ultimately declared themselves Unitarians. These latter now began to make their influence felt, and to appear more openly as a distinct and separate body. They were treated harshly by the Episcopalians ; and even many of their fellow-Nonconformists were equally intolerant, for the idea of religious liberty for all was as yet but imperfectly developed.

9. Three Nonconformist Worthies.—The history of this period is rich in celebrities, but of these three only can be specially noticed. *Matthew Henry*, whose valuable practical commentary is still read and prized, was the son of the saintly Philip Henry. In his boyhood the father had been a familiar associate of the Stuart princes, but was nevertheless one of the ejected of 1662. On the passing of the Act of Uniformity he had said : “ I would rather lose my all and save my conscience ”. Matthew was carefully brought up, and sent at the age of seventeen to the academy conducted by Thomas Doolittle in London. When this was broken up by persecution, young Henry entered as a law student ; but subsequently found his true vocation in the Presbyterian ministry. He laboured for twenty-five years at Chester,

and afterwards removed to Hackney; but he died suddenly at Nantwich on June 22nd, 1714, having been only two years in his new pastorate. His great work was written in the midst of many trials and difficulties, and was the object of much care and prayerful solicitude.

Daniel Defoe has already been mentioned as the militant champion of Nonconformity. He was the brilliant and redoubtable foe of social, political, and ecclesiastical tyranny. His courage, persistence, and versatility were remarkable. He was constantly being persecuted: fined, imprisoned, put in the stocks, and otherwise maltreated; and (worse probably than all) he was often scolded and abused, shunned and ignored by many of the more timid or more politic amongst the very persons whom he was courageous and disinterested enough to so cleverly and wittily defend. Yet he never seemed to despair; for no sooner had he paid the penalty of one offence against his ecclesiastical and political enemies, than he instantly committed another, and became apparently more formidable than ever. His writings were legion, and of great variety—poetry, prose, novels, satires and serious pieces, written frequently under very unpropitious circumstances. Although he was often unwise and intemperate in his language, it is certain that he did much towards preventing the Government and the High Church party from going to further extremes with his Nonconformist friends; and he deserves to be remembered with gratitude for his constant and bold advocacy of Free Church principles. Defoe ended his stormy and eventful life in 1731.

A man of other gifts and a different spirit altogether was *Isaac Watts*, the preacher, philosopher, and hymn writer. He was nevertheless a staunch Dissenter and a sturdy opponent of clerical pretensions. His father was a deacon

of the Independent Church at Southampton, and suffered there for the faith that was in him. Young Isaac early discovered a taste for poetry, and wrote verses at the age of seven. Being dissatisfied with the wretched doggerel and uncouth rhymes then slowly drawled out in his own church, as in all others according to the fashion of the time (which probably did not add to the popularity of Nonconformity), he complained to his father and the other deacons. He was invited to improve upon them. He did so, and produced the noble paraphrase, "Behold the glories of the Lamb". It met with warm approval, and he wrote for the Church hymn after hymn, introducing at the same time a quicker, more lively, and animated method of singing. The change for the better was soon apparent, and he was encouraged to go on until he had completed a whole volume. He was then not twenty-two.

Some years later he published his "*Hymns and Spiritual Songs*" (1707-9), and later still "*Divine and Moral Songs for Children*". His poetry is not reckoned of the highest order; but many of his pieces have been highly appreciated, and some of his hymns, as "There is a land of pure delight," "When I survey the wondrous Cross," and "O God, our help in ages past," will probably live in the affections of English-speaking Christian people when the finer productions of more elegant and popular poets are forgotten. Dr. Watts was also the author of a treatise on logic which was once a text-book at Oxford, and his philosophical writings are of considerable merit. He was pastor of a church in Mark Lane, London, and was an effective preacher. But feeble health compelled him early to relinquish regular pulpit work. He spent the greater part of his life as chaplain and tutor under the hospitable roof of Sir Thomas Abney, where he died in 1748.

CHAPTER VII

STRUGGLE FOR THE REMOVAL OF NONCONFORMIST DISABILITIES

FROM THE PASSING OF THE SCHISM ACT TO THE DEFEAT OF THE BILL TO ABOLISH THE TEST ACTS

1714-1739

1. **Loyal Nonconformists.**—As the Dissenters received with acclamation the news of the accession of the House of Hanover, so likewise did they loyally defend the Crown when it was attacked by its enemies. This was only natural, as they knew they could hope for nothing in the shape of real liberty from the representatives of the House of Stuart, and had only just escaped from losing what they had with such difficulty secured. The clerics and their friends the Jacobites, being stirred up by their “Church in danger” cry, had not waited for the expected restoration to wreak their vengeance on the Dissenters for falling in so readily with the new order of things and acclaiming it with so much gladness; already they had raised tumults in various places, and caused more chapels and meeting houses to be demolished. Accordingly, when the Pretender landed in Scotland, and whilst the rebellion lasted, the Nonconformists, for their own sake as well as for the king’s, responded with alacrity to the call to arms; and they showed themselves as willing to do battle

for the right, as did their sturdy and resolute forefathers, the Puritan soldiers of the Parliament. Some of their more wealthy and influential leaders, moreover, did not hesitate to raise and equip troops at their own expense. When the rebellion was quelled and the danger over, the Nonconformists, who had been most active in coming to the defence of the country, waited upon George I., and congratulated him on the defeat of the Jacobite design. In acknowledging their services, his majesty expressed the hope that in the future they and their friends would meet with more consideration at the hands of the State.

2. Abolition of the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts.—The Friends led the way to an agitation for relief from some of the disabilities imposed upon the Nonconformists. After the defeat of a reactionary Bill for the adoption of severe repressive measures against blasphemy and profanity, aimed professedly at Deists and Atheists, they procured the renewal of the Affirmation Act with a favourable alteration of its terms. Then Dr. Edmund Calamy, the third of that name, advocated the repeal of the Occasional Conformity Act; and soon there was instituted all over the country a systematic and formidable agitation, not only for that object, but also for the repeal of the Schism and the Test Acts. As the result of these effects, and of the friendly disposition of the king and the Government, a Bill was brought into Parliament to strengthen the Protestant interest, by repealing portions of the Occasional Conformity Act, of the Schism Act, and of the Test and Corporation Acts. It would probably have been passed in its entirety if the Dissenters had been less confiding, less mindful of the difficulties of the Government, and more thoroughly alive to their own interests generally. But they allowed

themselves to be too much influenced by circumstances ; and sacrificing themselves to the exigencies of their parliamentary friends (as they have too often done since) they lost the opportunity which never returned ; and thus they bound the disabilities of the objectionable Test and Corporation Acts on the necks of their successors for long years to come. The first part of the measure, however, passed the Legislature after much opposition (1719) ; and whilst the repeal of the Occasional Conformity Act afforded satisfaction to some Dissenters, the abrogation of the Schism Act rejoiced them all and imparted a feeling of infinite relief.

3. Renewed attempt to secure the repeal of the Test Acts.—Seeing the error they had committed in not taking due advantage of a favourable opportunity to set aside these obnoxious Acts, the Dissenters diligently endeavoured to correct it. But the ministers, who had put them off with specious arguments and empty, though perhaps well-meant promises, were in no hurry to go further ; and circumstances subsequently confirmed them in their disinclination. In the next reign (1739), when a deputation headed by Dr. Chandler waited on the premier, Robert Walpole, to remind him of his promise and to try and induce him to keep it, he gave the usual reply that, whatever were his private desires, he could not unfortunately gratify them, as the time had not arrived. “ You have so repeatedly returned this answer,” said Chandler ; “ I trust you will give me leave to ask when it will come.” “ If you want a specific answer,” replied the statesman, “ I will give it you in a word—never ! ” Walpole was above all things cautious, and he probably remembered the Sacheverell business, and thought the High Church clergy, plus the

mob, a greater danger to the State than the Dissenters. These, he imagined (however the Whigs might slight or smite them), would never be so foolish as to ally themselves with the Pretender. In spite of this rebuff, the Dissenters continued their efforts; and after another season of systematic preparation, a Bill to effect their purpose was introduced into the House of Commons. It was of no avail: the Government being not only apathetic but antagonistic, it was easily defeated. However, a kind of compromise was arranged. For many years an annual Act of Indemnity was passed to protect Dissenters who accepted office without being lawfully qualified.

4. **Origin of the Regium Donum.**—Some time before this disappointment, the politic Walpole had endeavoured to pose as the friend of the Dissenters, and was possibly vexed that they had come to demand of him what he considered inexpedient. He probably thought he had a claim upon their political consideration and support by a boon he had been able to secure for them. It having been suggested to Lord Townsend, that some pecuniary assistance would be gratefully accepted for the relief of widows of Dissenting ministers, he mentioned the matter to the premier, who spoke of it to the king. His majesty generously ordered £500 to be paid out of the Privy Purse for the purpose, and the grant was afterwards increased to nearly £1600 per annum. In announcing it to the delegates appointed to meet him Walpole said: "Take this for the use of your widows till the administration can more effectually serve your cause". The ministers thereupon accepted the money, though with some hesitation. Nearly a generation later, it was converted into a parliamentary grant, and

for this reason became objectionable to Free Churchmen.

5. Failure to cheapen process of Tithe and Church Rate Recovery.—In continuance of their resistance to the payment of these imposts, the Friends were enduring great hardships. Since the passing of the Act, in the reign of William III., to recover payment in a summary way, 1180 members of the society had been prosecuted in the Superior Courts, and more than 300 had been imprisoned, of whom several had died. Moreover, the authorities were not satisfied with the enforced collection of the money with the addition of a few simple charges, but often made these amount to very large sums. It sometimes happened, that for a debt of a few shillings many pounds of expenses were incurred—followed, in numerous cases, by the forfeiture of all the debtor's goods, and the loss of his personal liberty. The Friends endeavoured to lessen this evil, by obtaining the passing of a law for making the cost of collection more proportionate to the amount of the debt. The attempt was in vain. The clergy raised the cry, that their rights and privileges were in danger; and the Bill was rejected in the Lords by fifty-four votes to thirty-five, some fifteen bishops being in the majority.

6. Committee of Dissenting Deputies.—Nonconformists, however, were not quite at the mercy of their unscrupulous and extortionate adversaries. The Committee of Deputies from the Presbyterian, Independent, and Baptist denominations formed in 1732¹ to defend

¹ These "Dissenting Deputies" are to be distinguished from the "General Body of Protestant Dissenting ministers of the three denominations". This is a purely local organisation representing

and care for their interest, had begun its long career of usefulness; and its members were very active in the prevention and suppression of abuses, in so far as they were able. If for instance "a clergyman refused to bury the child of a Dissenter, they put the law in motion to compel him to do so; if Dissenting chapels were unjustly taxed, they resisted the claims that were made; if ignorant and intolerant justices refused to register places of worship, they were served with a mandamus from the Court of King's Bench to compel them to discharge their duty". The Deputies also successfully resisted demands for the payment of clerical fees, and for clerical charges made for services that were never rendered; moreover, they protected the rights of Dissenters in respect to charity schools, and saw to the legal observance of trust deeds. In a very brief period their vigilance gave them such power, that a check was effectually put upon the inroads of intolerance. Nevertheless, many abuses prevailed, which could not then be suppressed, and which were destined to continue for many years longer.

7. Depressed condition of Nonconformity.—But whilst the Dissenters were busily engaged in defending and maintaining what rights and privileges they possessed, and making some advance in certain directions, they were undoubtedly falling back in others. The number of Free Churches at the beginning of the period (1715-

the ministers of London and the neighbourhood only. Early in the eighteenth century, if not sooner, the Presbyterian, Independent and Baptist ministers of London had formed three boards for denominational purposes, and on several occasions these had united in presenting addresses to the sovereign. In 1727 they were organised into a "General Body," which however only meets when occasion requires,

1716), according to Daniel Neal the historian, who had gathered the statistics with infinite pains, was 1150. The list, however, is imperfect; it takes no account of Friends meeting houses, and omits many Presbyterian churches. Probably the number of Nonconformist places of worship would be upwards of 1500, of which about a hundred were in London. In these scarcely any change had been made. Things were at a standstill; and apparently, spiritual decadence had set in. The cessation of violent persecution, and the possession of a large amount of religious liberty, had been followed by a kind of latitudinarianism; and the Free Churches seemed coldly indifferent to the spiritual needs of the nation. They were mostly fast asleep, or were more awake to the preservation and advancement of their own particular interests than to the real interests of the people, whose helpers they professed to be. But they shared this spirit with the members of the Established Church, which if anything was in a worse condition. One reason, perhaps, for this sad state of things amongst the Dissenters, was the loss of many of their most earnest and devoted ministers who had passed from their midst during the last few years. But, probably, the chief causes of the decline were the controversies in which they were engaged, and the scepticism as to the truths of Christianity, which began generally to prevail.

8. Religious Controversies.—These few years were largely taken up with the discussion of questions of ecclesiastical polity, as well as the serious consideration of some of the cardinal doctrines and fundamental principles of the Christian religion. The Episcopalians were greatly excited over the outspoken utterances of *Hoadly*, Bishop of Bangor, who attacked the extravagant

pretensions of the High Church party, and seemed desirous of effecting a further reformation in the Establishment. This brought down upon him the angry remonstrances of Convocation; which charged him with undermining the constitution of the Church, and impeaching the supremacy of the king. So violent were the proceedings of the clergy, that in 1717 Convocation was prorogued, and not permitted to transact business again till the year 1850. Undoubtedly this was a great scandal, but it was one of the consequences of connection with the State. Had the Church been free, like other Churches, its clergy need not have waited year after year, for authority from the Government, to discuss their own affairs. The Convocation was always summoned *pro forma*, but prorogued immediately without being allowed to do anything! This was regarded as a hardship; but it should be remembered, that though Convocation is to some extent elective, it was never fairly representative of the Church. Moreover, from the Revolution to the year 1717 its proceedings had often been more mischievous than beneficial.

The Dissenters were distracted and divided by the controversy occasioned by *James Peirce* of Exeter, who had leanings toward Arianism, and omitted references to the Trinity in his public ministrations. Many were the meetings, and only too animated were the discussions, held by the ministers over this question, both in London and elsewhere; and ultimately Peirce was locked out of his pulpit as a heretic. An undesigned result of this controversy was that a great impetus was given to Arianism, which rapidly developed into Unitarianism. Its professors, joining themselves together, became from this time practically a separate denomination, though they still called themselves Presbyterians. Amongst the Dissenters, who embraced this creed, was *Thomas Emlyn*

of Dublin. Being reported to the authorities for writing against the Trinity, he was tried; and sentenced to pay a fine of £1000, and to lie in gaol until the fine was paid. Of the Episcopalians with Arian predilections, *William Whiston* and *Samuel Clarke* were the most noted. They were both censured by Convocation, and the former was expelled from the University of Cambridge.

The Deistical Controversy, or rather the disbelief which occasioned it, had much to do with enervating the Churches, and taking off their attention from spiritual progress and practical Christianity. It was inevitable, that when the human mind began to be released from the shackles of authority, men should come to inquire seriously as to the reason of their faith, and in not a few instances, to pass from faith to doubt, and from doubt to disbelief. Hence the great increase of scepticism and infidelity of the time. Such writers as Toland, Shaftesbury, and Collins, boldly attacked many of the generally received doctrines, and in some cases the Bible itself. Then Woolston ridiculed the miracles; and Tindal declared, that Christianity was entirely unnecessary, inasmuch as man possessed all that was requisite in the works of external nature.

The new doctrines found thousands of willing believers, and Deism became the creed of the dissolute and fashionable world. "An open and professed disregard to religion," said *Bishop Potter* in 1738, "is become through a variety of unhappy causes a distinguishing characteristic of the age. . . . This evil hath grown to a great height in the metropolis. Indeed it hath already brought in such dissoluteness and contempt of principle in the highest part of the world, and such profligate intemperance and fearlessness of committing crime in the lower, as must, if this torrent of impiety stop not, become absolutely fatal."

And *Bishop Butler*, in stating the circumstances which led him to compose his great work, "*The Analogy of Religion*," which was published a year or two before, wrote: "It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted by many persons that Christianity is not so much as a subject for inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious, and a principal subject of mirth and ridicule".

There was need then for energetic defence; and able defenders were not wanting, whose productions were, as a rule, well calculated to secure the end in view. Besides the standard work just mentioned, probably the most powerful replies were from the pens of *Sherlock*, Bishop of Bangor, and *James Foster*, a popular Baptist minister of London. It was then, too, that *Nathaniel Lardner*, a young Unitarian minister of the same city, began that great undertaking on the evidences—the "*Credibility of the Gospel History*," which occupied him for thirty years, and did such signal service to the Church.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GREAT EVANGELICAL REVIVAL

FROM THE COMMENCEMENT OF OPEN-AIR PREACHING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF METHODISM

1739-1744

1. **The Holy Club at Oxford.**—The Churches were going from bad to worse ; and error, unbelief, and impiety were getting a firmer hold on the people. But, meanwhile, God was preparing a movement which was destined to startle into new life the spiritual perceptions, the moral sympathies, and the benevolent activities of believers ; and thus to dissipate the apathy and indifference which generally prevailed, and to exercise untold influence for good on the future of the whole land. A few young men in the University of Oxford, more thoughtful and serious than the rest, had joined together in 1729 for the purpose of more systematically pursuing their studies and seeking the divine blessing on their lives. Hence in derision they were called “ *Methodists*,” and their union the “ *Holy Club*”. Of these earnest and godly students, *John* and *Charles Wesley* and *George Whitefield* became the most distinguished.

The brothers were sons of Samuel and Susanna Wesley. The father was the High Church vicar of Epworth, and a bitter opponent of Dissent, although he was the son of Nonconformists who had suffered

persecution for conscience' sake. His mother was also of Nonconformist parentage, being the daughter of Dr. Annesley, who was ejected from his living in Cripplegate in 1662. She was a devout, spiritually-minded woman, with considerable mental ability, and much strength of character. She too was of High Church sentiments; but later, she came to think little of clerical etiquette and ecclesiastical rules and regulations, when these appeared to stand in the way of doing good. During the absence of her husband, she frequently read and conversed with members of his flock, and she paid particular attention to the religion of the home. She was indefatigable in training her children in the fear of the Lord; and took special care of John, who when a child of five years old was rescued, as by a miracle, from the flames of the burning vicarage. Leaving home in 1714, the boy was sent to the Charterhouse School; and six years later, at the age of seventeen, he entered the University of Oxford, where he secured a fellowship. In 1727 he left to become his father's curate; but he returned again two years later, to become tutor in Lincoln College, and to find that, just before his arrival, his younger brother Charles and a few of his Christian friends had started the meetings, which were subsequently to prove of so much blessing to the world. Throwing himself heartily into the movement, he soon became its leading spirit, and was known amongst his acquaintances as the "Father of the Holy Club".

A few years later, the little band of religious enthusiasts was joined by *George Whitefield*, who was to give to the wonderful revival thus originated its mightiest impulse. He was one of the six sons of an innkeeper of Gloucester, and he spent some eighteen months in the house as "beer-drawer". But, being

destined for better things, he rose above his circumstances by the energy of his mind, the force of his character, and above all by the blessing of God. When eighteen years of age, he entered Pembroke College as a servitor, *i.e.*, an undergraduate partly supported by its funds. Whilst there, he distinguished himself by application to his studies; but more especially, by the austerity of his asceticism, and his burning zeal for the spiritual good of others. Diligently seeking the companionship of spiritually minded friends, he was thankful, at the invitation of Charles Wesley, to have the privilege of joining the Holy Club, and uniting with its members in their devotional exercises, their Biblical studies, and their various works of Christian benevolence.

2. Experiences of John and Charles Wesley.—The Holy Club was broken up in 1735, when the Wesleys and two of their friends left Oxford to go out as missionaries to Georgia. It is said, that when the former asked the permission of their sainted mother, who was then a widow, she promptly replied: “Had I twenty sons I should rejoice if they were all so employed, though I should never see them more”. From various causes, the brothers do not seem to have accomplished much in America. After some bitter experiences of the antipathy of the colonists to evangelist effort and clerical guidance, they both left the country, Charles six months after his arrival and his brother in 1737.

Whilst away from England however, and also on subsequent occasions, the Wesleys came into contact with the *Moravians*,¹ whose plain religious services, strong faith,

¹The Moravians are a community of Christians who had their origin in Bohemia, and were driven by persecution to take refuge in

and intense religious fervour, attracted much of their attention, and exercised not a little influence over their minds. There seems to be no doubt, that it was mainly from these excellent and devoted men, that they first obtained an adequate view of the simplicity, the fulness, and the sufficiency of the gospel to save and sanctify the sinner. Charles first found pardon, rest and peace without money and without price; and John relates, how he himself crossed the Rubicon of Traditionalism, Ceremonialism and Self. It was at a meeting of his Methodist friends in London (1738) whilst listening to the reading of Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans, where the reformer describes the change wrought in the heart through faith in Christ; "I felt my heart strangely warmed," he says, "I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away my sins, even *mine* and saved *me* from the law of sin and death". Full of gratitude and gladness, and attended by a few friends, who rejoiced with him in his new-found happiness, he immediately went to his sick brother's lodgings, and communicated to him the welcome tidings.

3. Beginnings of the Revival were in the meantime being made manifest in the remarkable results which accompanied the evangelistic labours of Whitefield. His

Saxony. They have always been distinguished for the simplicity of their evangelical faith and worship, the purity and beneficence of their lives, and the ardour of their missionary zeal. In 1722 their first emigrants arrived in England, and in 1737 Count Zinzendorf, their distinguished leader, visited London, and organised some pious Germans into a society in connection with the Moravian Church. Subsequently this community took a place, not prominent, but spiritually influential amongst the Free Churches of England.

first sermon preached in Bristol after his ordination in Gloucester Cathedral (1736) is reported to have "driven fifteen persons mad". It was on the necessity of regeneration, and was an earnest and eloquent call to repentance. The visit was renewed in the next year, when crowds went to hear the young preacher, and the greatest excitement prevailed. Thence Whitefield passed on to Gloucester once more; and then travelled to London and other places, in all of which he had the same experience of wonderful popularity. He often preached nine times a week; and so eager were the people to hear him, that they often rose before daylight, and found their way to the place of meeting from all parts of the metropolis by the light of their horn lanterns.

Great was the sorrow of many when this extraordinary preacher, whose eloquent and racy sermons proved so powerful an attraction, paid a brief visit to Georgia on the invitation of Wesley. Returning, however, to raise funds for a proposed orphanage, Whitefield resumed his evangelistic labours, and his popularity became greater than ever. The clergy, who had previously looked askance at his proceedings, and had begun to close their pulpits against him, now became more jealous and angry, and were increasingly determined to exclude him from their churches. He did not respect the parochial system, they said, and inasmuch as he emptied their buildings, was no other than a "spiritual pickpocket". It was high time to defend themselves against him. He thereupon determined to copy the Master's example by preaching under the canopy of heaven. The evangelist's first effort was amongst the ignorant and degraded colliers of Kingswood near Bristol (1739). "Finding," he says, "that the pulpits are denied me, and the poor

colliers are ready to perish for lack of knowledge, I went to them and preached on a mount to a couple of hundred. Blessed be God that the ice is broken, and I have now taken the field. I thought it might be doing service to my Creator, Who had a mountain for His pulpit and the heavens for His sounding board, and Who, when the gospel was refused by the Jews, sent His servants into the highways and hedges." Thus was the great evangelical movement launched.

4. Revival in full progress.—When next Whitefield visited Bristol, he had an audience of ten thousand; and his preaching was followed by marvellous results in the touching of men's hearts and the transformation of their lives. The tears shed by the rough and uncouth colliers "made white gutters down their blackened faces," and they sought with anxious eagerness the forgiveness of their sins, and grace from God to forsake them. Nor were these sons of subterranean toil the only persons affected. The contagion of sorrow, repentance, and regeneration flew from rank to rank; and all classes became deeply interested in the question of personal salvation. From Bristol the evangelist went again to Gloucester; then passed into Wales; and after visiting various parts of the country, came once more to London, where at Moorfields he commenced his memorable mission amongst the poor, the needy, and the outcasts of the great metropolis. On this spot, where his tabernacle was soon after erected, and on Kennington Common on the south side of the river, he sometimes preached to as many as forty thousand people.

Whilst Whitefield was beginning to discover his true vocation of evangelist to the masses, and making religion a power for good amongst them, John Wesley was engaged

in another part of the city in working for the same end, in a somewhat quieter and less public manner. He had established a society of Methodists in Fetter Lane; and there he held meetings, for the spiritual improvement of his converts. His preaching to the people, however, began to be attended with remarkable manifestations—persons being convicted of a sense of sin crying aloud in their agony of shame and fear; and then, when they experienced the blessedness of forgiveness, going straightway into ecstasies of gratitude and gladness. Hence there followed a great deal of criticism on the part of sober-minded Christians, who had never experienced or witnessed such outbursts of emotion, and who were scandalised at what they deemed unbecoming behaviour. But Wesley heeded it not, so long as those thus strangely affected were giving subsequent indications of a thorough change of heart and life.

All this was going on within the walls of a building set apart for religious purposes; and as yet, the persons chiefly concerned had no notion of the propriety or the necessity of preaching to the multitude outside. Wesley was, however, soon called to share with Whitefield the larger and more arduous field of labour. Not long after the latter's first meeting with the colliers, he invited his friend to go down and help him make the gospel known to the people. He hesitated about the advisability of taking so unusual, and apparently so improper a course; but after seeking to ascertain the will of God, he saw his duty clearer, and consented (as he said) "to be more vile," for the Master's sake, even to preaching the gospel of salvation in the highways. His decision was doubtless hastened by his knowledge of the fact that the churches were being one after another closed against him. On April 1, 1739, Wesley found himself in Bristol, and

one of the immense congregation to whom the evangelist was speaking. "I could scarce reconcile myself at first," he says, "to this strange way of preaching in the fields of which he set me an example on Sunday; having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in church." On the Monday afternoon Wesley preached in the open air to about three thousand souls from the words, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor"; and for fully ten weeks he remained in Bristol, speaking four times on a Sunday, and once almost every other day in the week.

From that period Wesley became an enthusiastic evangelist; proclaiming for years (sometimes in association with his brother, and sometimes alone) the blessed news of salvation, anywhere and everywhere if only he might be privileged to save men from their sins. His preaching does not appear to have been attended by such crowds as that of Whitefield, who continued to attract many thousands of hearers. But it was equally effective; and the results were rendered the more abiding by the wise care the preacher took of his converts, and the extraordinary aptitude he displayed in organising them into active and self-sustaining communities.

Early in his evangelistic and administrative career, John Wesley, in conjunction with his brother, began the writing of those beautiful and inspiring hymns, which represent almost every phase of life, experience and aspiration; and which have ever since aided the devotion and called forth the gratitude of the entire Church. Charles, who has been justly called the "Sweet Singer of Methodism," wrote by far the greater number. He was

a poet of no mean order. Dr. Watts saw his poem on "Wrestling Jacob" in manuscript and said: "That is worth all I have ever written". Some of his productions, as "Jesu, Lover of my soul," "O for a thousand tongues to sing," and "Come, let us join our friends above," seem destined like some of Watts' to last until the Lord comes, and the reunion of Christendom is consummated with the one glad song of all the redeemed above.

5. Persecution of the Methodists.—The work of evangelising the masses in this novel and original way was not only difficult, it was also extremely hazardous. The rough element amongst the populace were glad of the opportunity afforded them by the large open-air gatherings of creating disturbances; others objected to being spoken to so plainly about their various shortcomings; others again, being engaged in questionable trades and occupations, were exasperated because they saw in some instances that the hope of their gains was going; and yet others, the sacerdotal or the worldly-minded clergy, resented all implied criticism of their proceedings, and what they regarded as an unwarrantable intrusion into their own domain—the spiritual instruction and care of the people. Hence a considerable amount of violent and discreditable opposition was often stirred up by some of the jealous or bigoted ministers of the Established Church.

At Moorfields Fair, when large numbers left the shows to hear Whitefield preach, he was pelted with stones, rotten eggs, dead cats, and garbage of all sorts; but nothing daunted, he preached on to the end, and announced his intention of returning in the evening. On the same occasion one of the clowns, whose show had been forsaken, came to thrash him with a whip; but failed

to do him harm. True to his promise, the intrepid evangelist returned to the fair; and when, late at night, his work was done, he left the place with abundant evidence that God had blessed him once more by saving souls from sin.

It was the same with the Wesleys. Some of the clergy seem to have made themselves literally mad against the two evangelists, and constantly pursued them with shameful animosity. They preached against them in their pulpits, spoke of them passionately as "heretics, papists, fellow-traitors, and beings altogether possessed with the devil". At Epworth John Wesley was repulsed from the Lord's Table by the drunken successor of his father, as being a person unfit to receive the sacrament. At Wednesbury the clergymen incited the people to a riot; "all the Methodists who could be found, men and women were beaten, pelted, stoned and their houses dismantled". "When Wesley visited the sufferers in October, 1743, the mob beset the house, and compelled him to go with them to the magistrate. For five hours, amidst rain and darkness, he was surrounded by furious rioters from Wednesbury and Walsall; but he was as calm and self-possessed as though he had been sitting in his study. The woman who led the Wednesbury mob became his champion, and the captain of the Walsall rioters also took his part. 'Sir,' he said, 'I will spend my life for you. Follow me.' He was wonderfully preserved. He only lost one flap of his waistcoat and a little skin off one of his hands. A man struck repeatedly at his head with a large oak stick, but he always missed the mark. When he reached Nottingham after this terrible experience, Charles Wesley said: 'My brother came delivered out of the mouth of the lions. He looked like a soldier of Christ. His clothes were torn to tatters.' "

Charles himself did not escape ill-usage. At Sheffield he was struck in the face by stones thrown in a riot instigated by the clergy. The disturbance continued the whole of the night, and the meeting house was pulled down by the infuriated mob. During a tour in Cornwall, the good man also met with severe and brutal treatment. At Devizes the fire engine was played into his house, and the windows were broken. At St. Ives the miners gutted the chapel; and, armed with clubs, threatened him with death, if he preached there again. At Poole the church-warden led the mob to the place where he was preaching, and drove him and his congregation from the parish. But both the Wesleys were as brave and undaunted as Whitefield; and in spite of clerical animosity and abuse, resulting so frequently in physical opposition and brutal ill-treatment from the irreligious multitude, they calmly pursued their way, and persistently preached to the perishing multitudes the saving word of life.

6. Revival in Wales.—Whilst these events were transpiring in England, the principality was being stirred to its depths by somewhat similar influences. The country was in a deplorable condition, and sadly needed the revivifying influence of the gospel. Dense ignorance and utter indifference, drunkenness, licentiousness, and wickedness of all kinds generally prevailed. The education and moral welfare of the people had been almost entirely neglected, and what had been done in that direction was accomplished very largely without the aid or the sympathy of the ecclesiastical authorities. Many of the clerical appointments were held by non-resident ministers, and most of the clergy who did reside in their parishes were ignorant of the native language. Not

a few also were worldly and irreligious men, whose characters were a disgrace to their sacred profession.

Since the days of Elizabeth, the gloom had been illumined by a few worthy men such as *Vavasor Powell*, *William Wroth*, *Rees Pritchard*, and *Walter Cradock*; but these had made but a comparatively slight impression on the thick darkness that hung like a heavy pall over the land. In the early part of the century another reformer had risen, whose work seemed likely to be more fruitful and permanent. This was *Griffith Jones*, the incumbent of Llandeilo and Llandowror. Aided by sympathetic friends he established a well-organised system of schools. He also founded a teacher's seminary for religious persons; and when these were sufficiently qualified, he sent them out as travelling schoolmasters to visit town after town, and impart what instruction their opportunities afforded them. By this means in 1741, about ten years after the movement began, 178 of these schools, whose scholars were mostly adults, were being carried on. At his death, twenty years later, the temporary schools had numbered 3,495 and the scholars more than 150,000.

In the year 1725 *Howell Harris*, a native of Trevecca, appeared as a preacher, and soon excited great attention, not only amongst his own people, but in England also. Both Whitefield and Wesley gave him their sympathy and rendered personal aid. Harris relates, that for seven years in all weathers, and generally out of doors, he had preached three and four and frequently five times a day, going from place to place and travelling from ten to thirty miles in that period. He was wonderfully successful in these efforts; but like his friends the English evangelists, he had to run the gauntlet of cruel persecutions, in some cases barely escaping with his life. Even more wonderful perhaps was the career of his contemporary,

Daniel Rowlands of Nantewnlla and Llangeitho. The people appeared willing to make any sacrifice in order to hear him preach, journeying it is said from all parts of Wales, sometimes from places sixty or a hundred miles distant. Like the pilgrims going up to Jerusalem, "they travelled," says Thomas Charles of Bala, "from twenty to thirty together, or in two companies, some on foot and some on horseback, both men and women. Those on foot started early on Saturday, and took a shorter course over the mountains, without any support except the food they had brought with them, and their drink was pure water from the mountain springs. After hearing one or two sermons from Rowlands, they returned home again, fully satisfied and abundantly repaid for all the toil of their journey." As the numerical results of these apostolic labours, Rowlands is said to have had in Cardiganshire 3000 communicants, and Harris in Pembrokeshire 2000.

In Wales too persecution accompanied the revival. Williams of Pantycelyn, the hymn writer, being in "deacons orders," was excommunicated for persisting in preaching without the bishop's licence; and William Seward was murdered by rioters whilst preaching at Hay (October 22, 1742).

7. Establishment of Methodism in England and Wales.—It was not the intention of the Wesleys to found a new denomination; but this was necessarily the result of the movement they inaugurated. When John Wesley broke through the bonds of ecclesiastical discipline, and "made the world his parish" by preaching wherever the Spirit led him; and when, soon after, he established his first societies in London and Bristol (1739), with their classes, love feasts and watch-night

services, he was practically taking the first steps towards separating from the Church ; to be followed afterwards by other steps, and finally by the acknowledgment of formal separation.

The societies grew in numbers as the converts increased, and they had all to be assiduously cared for, and properly superintended. Leaders were appointed for the classes ; and some of the more earnest and intelligent of the members were permitted to be exhorters and expounders of Scripture. But this plan proved insufficient for Methodist needs. At length, one of these good men, *Thomas Maxwell*, a lay-member of the Moorfield Society, in whose heart the love of souls burnt brightly, ventured to preach a regular sermon which God blessed to several souls. As soon as Wesley heard of this seeming impropriety, he was exceedingly angry, and determined to nip the dangerous innovation in the bud. His excellent mother, however, wiser and more prudent and practical than he, asked him to go and hear for himself and witness the results of the preaching. He did so, sitting in a dark corner of Moorfield Chapel ; and was constrained to say, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good". From that time forward the novelty was permitted, and soon became no novelty at all, but a distinguishing mark of Methodism, and probably one of the principal causes of its success. Local preachers sprang up all over the country ; and some of them, as *John Nelson*, the Yorkshire mason, were almost as popular, and perhaps as successful as Wesley himself.

The *First Conference*, or General Assembly for the conduct of Methodist affairs, was held in 1744. This marks the regular establishment of Methodism, when the various societies were constituted into a properly

organised ecclesiastical body. It was, however, only the day of small things; the members, called together by Wesley, comprising only six clergymen (including himself and brother) and four lay-preachers. At this Conference the Society was formed into circuits, certain questions of government and discipline were decided, and an agreement was come to respecting doctrine. The doctrines and homilies of the Church were generally accepted; but stress was laid on the necessity of spiritual regeneration—justification and sanctification being regarded as distinct from each other; and in regard to what are called the “Doctrines of Grace,” the tendency was to the Arminian rather than to the Calvinistic position.

Therein lay the chief difference between the followers of Wesley and those of Whitefield. The latter had held to the ordinary Calvinistic theories, prevalent among both Churchmen and Dissenters; whilst the former, probably through his intercourse with the Moravians, had adopted those of the opposite school. Whitefield having no gift for organisation, but few Churches came into separate existence in England as the result of his preaching; and these were established mainly through the efforts of the noble and high-minded lady, *Selina Countess of Huntingdon*, who was one of his firmest supporters and friends. Her influence amongst the aristocracy and the public men of the day was great; and at her invitation a distinguished company often attended services in her house. By this and other means, she succeeded in gaining a hearing for the evangelical movement amongst the upper classes of society, and thus assisted in its extension. Her best work, however, was in encouraging and organising religious effort amongst the people. It was her greatest delight to spend her time, her talents, and her money in the service of the

Master—building churches, appointing ministers, sending out evangelists and teachers, and providing for the education of a Christian Ministry. The Churches which she was the means of establishing in England (now known as the *Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion*) have been closely allied to the Congregationalists; and most of them are now included in Congregational Associations.

In Wales, where the influence of Whitefield was great, and the countess rendered considerable aid to the evangelistic movement, the *Welsh Calvinistic Church* was established; and has, ever since, continued to grow in power and influence. Various societies had already been formed by Howell Harris; and in 1743 a representative meeting was held, at which Whitefield was present; when a union was regularly constituted, and rules laid down for the government of the community.

8. General Results of the Revival.—All classes were influenced by the preaching of the evangelists, and by the intense excitement attending it; and the foundation was undoubtedly laid for a radical change in the moral condition of the people. Many were already regenerated, and were leading nobler and better lives; and most of these, by the examples of purity and godliness they exhibited, and the zeal with which they endeavoured to propagate their principles, were influencing others, and thus beginning to permeate society with the leaven of righteousness.

The influence of the revival upon the Established Church and the Nonconformists was strongly marked. It was a distinct encouragement and help to those evangelical clergymen who were faithfully labouring to combat the immense amount of superstition, unbelief and wickedness prevalent amongst their parishioners. Many

others also, who had hitherto been idle, or altogether careless of their spiritual responsibilities to the practically heathen people around them, were made to realise the solemnity of the vows they had taken ; and they began to evince, by useful and happy activities, a real desire to be a veritable blessing to the souls committed to their charge. The Nonconformist ministers again, turning largely from unprofitable theological disputes, saw more clearly that their principal duty consisted in preaching to the multitude the saving gospel of the blessed God. Advance in this direction was not so rapid, perhaps, as might have been expected ; but it is certain that the increased vitality of the Church, as exhibited in works of Christian beneficence, and the steady growth of their power and influence dates from this remarkable time of refreshing. Green says : “ The Methodists themselves were the least result of the Methodist revival. Its action upon the Church broke the lethargy of the clergy ; and the evangelical movement, which found representatives like Newton and Cecil within the pale of the Establishment, made the fox-hunting parson and absentee rector at last impossible. But the noblest result of the religious revival was the steady attempt, which has never ceased from that day to this, to remedy the guilt, the ignorance, the physical suffering, the social degradation of the profligate and the poor. It was not till the Wesleyan revival had done its work that the philanthropic movement began.”

CHAPTER IX

HALF A CENTURY OF PATIENT EFFORT

FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF METHODISM TO THE
AGITATION FOR THE ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE

1744-1792

1. Controversy on the Reasonableness and the Duty of Dissent.—Just before the commencement of the revival, Dr. Watts had written on the duty of Nonconformists to adhere to their principles ; and, in 1739, had started an inquiry as to whether an established religion was consistent with the liberties of mankind. His frank and outspoken sentiments did not carry with them the consent of his more cautious and timid brethren. They evoked, moreover, several lengthy replies from the clergy ; notably from William Warburton subsequently Bishop of Gloucester, and John White, vicar of Osprey.

But these again called forth a sturdy defence of Dissent, and a formidable attack on the foundations of the State Church, by *Micaiah Towgood*, a Presbyterian minister of Crediton. This courageous and vigorous writer did not spend time over the discussion of the liturgies, rites and ceremonies, or other mere incidentals of the Establishment ; but he boldly denounced it altogether, as being more the servant of the State than of Jesus Christ. He pointed out its disgraceful subjection to the civil power, and made manifest its love of dominion and the

strength and bitterness of its persecuting spirit. He denied, moreover, that it was an essential part of the British Constitution; and he asked the public whether the monarchy would in reality be destroyed and the State thrown into anarchy, if what was called "The Church" no longer existed. Such plain language, and such very pertinent and proper inquiries, excited no little attention, and helped to prepare the way for a wider acceptance of Free Church principles.

2. **Scant Justice to Dissenters.**—But in the meantime bigotry and prejudice largely prevailed; and scant justice was meted out to those who were conscientiously compelled to remain outside the Establishment. When rebellion broke out again in Scotland, in 1745, and the Pretender, after defeating the royal forces at Prestonpans, was permitted (through some strange mismanagement on the part of his opponents) to make his way to within a hundred miles of London, the Nonconformists once more hastened to the defence of the House of Hanover. But the only reward they obtained was the thanks of the king, and a Free Pardon for those who had incurred the penalties of the Test Act, for allowing their loyalty and patriotism to prompt them to accept commissions in the army, without taking the prescribed oath and receiving the sacrament after the manner of the Church of England!

A short time afterwards this same statute was used by the authorities of the city of London for a most unworthy purpose. Knowing the conscientious objections of Dissenters against qualifying for municipal service by taking the sacrament in the prescribed manner, they "passed a by-law imposing a fine of £400 and £600 respectively upon every person who should decline standing for the

office of sheriff, after he had been nominated to it; or who having been elected, should refuse to serve". The fines thus obtained were to be devoted to the building of the new Mansion House. For six years, from 1748-1754, Dissenters were almost the only persons nominated; and, as one after another refused to serve, the fines were collected until they reached the large sum of more than £15,000. A spirit of resistance was at length aroused, and it was determined by the advice of the "Dissenting Deputies" to test the matter in the courts of law. Messrs. *Sheafe*, *Streatfield*, and *Evans* were successively elected, and each declined the office. Proceedings against them were immediately commenced, and were subsequently carried on in different courts. The charge against Mr. Streatfield fell to the ground; then Mr. Sheafe died; and the case of Mr. Evans was, after prolonged delays, ultimately decided by the House of Lords in his favour (1767). Lord Mansfield in his speech eloquently defended religious liberty, and said "the persecution was as bad as that of Procrustes; if they are too short, stretch them, and if too long lop them. . . . Of the Dissenters who have been appointed to the office, one was blind and another bedridden."

3. Abolition of Nonconformist subscription to the doctrinal articles of the Church of England.—

This further extension of Toleration was reluctantly consented to after a hard struggle. The movement began in the Establishment itself by a number of clergymen, who had imbibed liberal ideas, and wished to secure for themselves relief from the statutory terms of subscription. Their leader was *Theophilus Lindsay*, vicar of Catterick in Yorkshire, who afterwards seceded and became minister of a Unitarian congregation in London.

Strenuous endeavours were made to get a Bill passed to that end ; but they entirely failed, as Parliament absolutely refused to release these Episcopal ministers from the declarations to which they had subscribed, or to permit others to occupy similar positions without subscription. It was said, however, in the course of the debate, that had the Bill been for the relief of the Dissenters alone, the case would have been different. Taking the hint thus thrown out, the committee of deputies prepared a Bill exempting Nonconformist ministers, tutors, and schoolmasters from the necessity of subscribing to the articles. It met however with unexpected opposition, and was rejected.

Not at all discouraged, the Dissenters tried again and once more failed, chiefly through the adverse influence of the bishops. But undismayed, they now attacked these high-placed dignitaries of the Church, who were such persistent opponents of religious liberty ; and so vigorous was their onslaught, and so pertinent and scathing the language in which they made it, that the bishops themselves began to waver, in order to avoid some of the odium thus thrust upon them. “ What said you,” asked *Robert Robinson*, the Baptist minister, of the clergyman he was addressing, “ to the Dissenting clergy whom you flatter and soothe and call brethren in Christ ? Are they freed from oaths and subscriptions and penal laws ? Christian liberty ! thou favourite offspring of heaven ! thou first-born of Christianity ! I saw the wise and pious servants of God nourish thee in their houses, and cherish thee in their bosoms ! I saw them lead thee into public view : all good men hailed thee ! the generous British Commons caressed and praised thee, and led thee into an upper house and there—there thou didst expire in the holy lap of spiritual lords ! ” The spiritual lords

could not endure much of this directness and plainness of speech, accompanied as it was by the quiet laughter of the more intelligent and least prejudiced part of the community; and so, in 1779, they supported another Bill for the abolition of Nonconformist subscription, which accordingly passed both Houses, and duly became law.

4. **Another agitation for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts** was commenced a few years later. It was preceded by an attempt to secure the abrogation of the penal laws against Roman Catholics, which was partially successful; further relief being afforded at a later period (1791). Encouraged by the victory they had won in the matter of subscription; and stimulated by the indulgence now extended to their fellow-Nonconformists of another faith, the Dissenters began to hope that the acts, which had proved so irritating and oppressive, could by a little perseverance on their part be removed altogether from the Statute Book. Accordingly, they proceeded to take the necessary measures; and having solicited the support of Pitt and Fox, the celebrated statesmen, they placed their proposal in the hands of Mr. Beaufoy, who introduced it to the House, March 28, 1787. After an animated debate, however, it was defeated by 178 to 100 votes. Thereupon the committee issued an address to their friends, urging them to assiduously pursue their end, and apply themselves all the more vigorously to the task before them. But all their exertions were for the time in vain; for after two years of strenuous endeavour, they were once more disappointed by seeing the Bill rejected. In the following year (1790) Mr. Fox took it in hand; but only to find, that all his eloquence and influence

was of no avail against the hosts of bigotry, privilege, and prejudice arrayed on the other side.

5. **Popular feeling against Dissenters** had been growing for some time. Probably the main cause of the opposition to their wishes was their avowed sympathy with the American patriots, and to some extent with the French Republicans—at least in the earlier stages of the Revolution. It was natural that the majority of Nonconformists should feel kindly towards the former, the descendants of their Puritan forefathers who had been forced from their English homes by persistent persecution, and driven into rebellion by the obstinate exercise of arbitrary power; and it was not at all unlikely that they would look with favour upon the determined efforts of the French to free themselves from the tyrants, who had goaded them to madness by their long-continued cruelties. But subsequent developments—the acknowledged atheism of the Republican leaders, and the atrocities of “the Terror”—excited a reactionary spirit, such as England had not known for eighty years; and in the then excited state of public opinion, it was dangerous for Dissenters, with strong views respecting the inalienable rights of the people, to give expression to their generous sentiments. Nevertheless, many did not hesitate to loudly proclaim their opinions; and accordingly, they brought down upon themselves the high displeasure of the authorities, and the indignation and violence of the multitude.

Amongst the men who thus incautiously defended the cause of liberty were *Dr. Priestley* and *Dr. Price*, two Presbyterian ministers holding Unitarian views, who had become famous by the energy and persistence with which they had battled for the rights of Nonconformists. All

the representatives of despotic government in Church and State were immediately up in arms. It was said, that these advocates of freedom, and those associated with them, wanted to destroy the Establishment, as their ancestors had done in the time of the Commonwealth. The pulpits rang with denunciations: and in Birmingham the mob, led on by the clergy, destroyed Dr. Priestley's valuable library and scientific apparatus; and then set fire to his house, shouting as they did so, "Down with the Dissenters!" "Down with the abettors of the French Revolution!" "Church and King for ever!" Riots also occurred in other places; and for some time afterwards, the Nonconformists found, that instead of seeking to obtain the further removal of their disabilities, they would have enough to do to defend their property if not their lives.

6. **Extension and Consolidation of Methodism.**—

After the first years of the revival, the new denomination it had called into existence continued to grow and flourish. Its zealous and devoted preachers went through all the land; travelling even into Scotland and crossing the sea to Ireland, they made converts by hundreds and thousands. These were gathered into societies, which were anxiously nourished and cared for by their respective superintendents. Their leaders still maintained their nominal connection with the Establishment, and exhorted all their followers to receive the sacraments at the hands of the regularly ordained clergy. But a spirit of independence was growing up amongst the people; and they began to ask themselves why their own ministers should not be considered fit and proper persons to administer the sacraments, especially where the parish clergy were ungodly men.

After the Conference had regulated the affairs of the society for upwards of ten years, it was thought by many that the time had come to bring the question to an issue. Accordingly, it was introduced at the Conference which met in 1755, and which was composed of sixty-five preachers. But, after a debate of three days, it was decided not to separate from the Church. This decision was doubtless arrived at chiefly through the influence of John Wesley. Notwithstanding all the opposition he met with from the clergy, and the injuries he sustained at their hands, his love for the Church was unquenchable, and he was determined, if possible, not to dissociate himself from it. In this mind Wesley continued; and even a few years before his death, he went so far as to say: "When the Methodists leave the Church of England, God will leave them". And yet, comparatively early in his career, he foresaw eventual separation; and, like the shrewd practical man that he was, began to prepare for it.

As the years went by and the distance between the Church and her Methodist children became greater, steps had to be taken, which were in themselves marks of severance, and a virtual acknowledgment of freedom from external control. Methodism took root in America in 1766, and in a few years its adherents there were numbered by tens of thousands. Wesley begged the Bishop of London to ordain ministers for them, but in vain. He was therefore compelled to take decisive action. As far back as 1746, he had been convinced, by reading Lord King's Essay on the Primitive Church, that there is no essential distinction between Bishop and Presbyter. In 1784, in conjunction with a clergyman named Creighton, he ordained *Dr. Coke* as Bishop of the American Societies, and immediately afterwards *Richard Whatcoat* and *Thomas Vasey* as ministers in the same field. The

following year, he set apart three more helpers to labour in Scotland; and subsequently, others to assist him in the work in England. In the year 1784, Methodism received a legal constitution. A deed was drawn up by Wesley containing the names of one hundred preachers who were to form the Legal Conference, defining its rights over the chapels, and its power to appoint ministers, and exercise discipline and control over them. By this means the conference was regularised, and its work of governing the various societies, of which it was the representative, made easier. The venerable founder of Methodism died in his house in City Road, London, in the eighty-eighth year of his age, and continued active to the last (1791). Almost his last words were: "And best of all, God is with us," as indeed He was. His brother Charles had passed away in Marylebone in the previous year.

About 1770 Wesley published some "*Minutes*" directed against Antinomianism, which was causing mischief in many local societies. This excited a violent controversy. Lady Huntingdon, whose opinions were strongly Calvinistic, renounced the friendship of Wesley, and much bitterness ensued. The most lasting result was to elicit the controversial writings of *John Fletcher* of Madeley, the theologian of Methodism, which more than anything else contributed to the decadence of Calvinism. Shortly before the outbreak of this painful controversy, the zealous George Whitefield had entered into rest. He died in America, whither he had gone to promote the interests of his Orphan Home and other benevolent institutions. His theology was decidedly Calvinistic; but this did not materially diminish his friendship with Wesley, who preached a memorial sermon for him in Tottenham Court Road Tabernacle.

Methodism in Wales had, in the meantime, been making

progress: though it was not so great as might have been expected, owing partly to differences between Rowlands and Harris. Both these eloquent and indefatigable evangelists died in 1773, and Williams of Pantycelyn, their fellow-labourer, in 1791. In the same year departed the Countess of Huntingdon, who took so much interest in the evangelisation of the principality. Welsh Methodism was, from the first, totally distinct from the movement directed by Wesley. It was always Calvinistic; and though organised in 1743, did not separate from the Established Church for nearly seventy years afterwards. There was no Wesleyan preaching in Wales till the beginning of the nineteenth century.

7. Progress of the Older Denominations.—During the latter half of the eighteenth century the *English Presbyterians* almost ceased to exist as an evangelical denomination. Nearly all their Churches became either Independent or Unitarian; and from many of the latter class, the orthodox members seceding formed Independent societies, which they endeavoured to guard against similar lapses by rigid trust deeds. The *Independent* ministers of the period were generally evangelical; but scarcely any of them attained to eminence. Amongst the *Baptists*, there was a larger number of distinguished preachers; but in doctrine they were much at variance. The *Particular* or *Calvinistic* Baptists, after the learned labours of *Dr. John Gill* (1697-1771), tended more and more towards Antinomianism—a tendency which was only checked by the growing influence of *Andrew Fuller* (1754-1815); while the *General* or *Arminian* Baptists were drifting steadily towards Unitarianism, until the formation of the “New General Baptist Association” under the leadership of *Daniel Taylor* (1738-1816).

About twenty Nonconformist schools of Divinity originated during the eighteenth century. Several of these had but a short existence; and some were amalgamated with each other, or with older institutions. But the following are in full and vigorous operation: the *Bristol Baptist College*, originated in 1720; the *Western College*, Plymouth, commenced at Ottery in 1752; *United College*, Bradford, commenced at Heckmondwike in 1756; *Brecon Memorial College*, established at Abergavenny, 1757; *Manchester College*, Oxford, Unitarian, commenced at Warrington in 1757; the *Countess of Huntingdon's College*, Cheshunt, founded at Trevecca in 1768; and the *Baptist College*, Nottingham, began in London, 1797.

8. **Advance of Practical Christianity.**—The chief characteristic of the Churches, towards the latter end of this period, was the steady growth of a philanthropic spirit. It distinguished the early work of the leaders of Methodism at Oxford, when Whitefield and the Wesleys laboured amongst the inmates of the gaol and the poor of the city; and it accompanied the movement all along, manifesting itself most of all, perhaps, amongst the members of the Society of Friends. Men began to think seriously, not only of the moral and spiritual condition of their fellows, but of their wretched mental and physical state; and they set about trying to improve it.

To *John Howard*, a member of Dr. Stennett's Baptist Congregation in London, belongs the honour of visiting the gaols in England and other countries, and effecting considerable changes for the better in the unhappy lot of the prisoners confined therein. His self-denying labours were incessant, and extended over a period of nearly twenty years. About the same time *Hannah More*, the authoress, an adherent of the Established Church, struck

with the utterly neglected condition of the people in the west of England, opened schools for the children of the poor in the neighbourhood of Bristol. She was much opposed by the worldly and ungodly clergy of her own Church, and was actually prosecuted in the ecclesiastical court. She carried on her work, however, with great assiduity; and in seven years, there were some sixteen hundred children under instruction, and the whole district became reformed. *Wesley* had also established day schools at Kingswood, and other places, and had paid some attention to the instruction of children on the Sabbath. *Theophilus Lindsay* had also opened a *Sunday School* at Catterick in 1764. But this movement is generally dated from the year 1781; when *Robert Raikes* of Gloucester, an Episcopalian, seeing the way in which the people spent their Sundays in noise, riot, gambling, cursing and swearing, and pitying above all the children among them, gathered a number into a Sabbath School, and employed persons to instruct them. The scheme prospered and became popular. In 1785, a *Sunday School Society* was formed in London through the co-operation of William Fox, Jonas Hanway, Henry Thornton, and Samuel Hoare, and at once received the support of members of all denominations, but particularly those of the Free Churches. It flourished exceedingly; and in a few more years, Sunday Schools were established in many parts of the kingdom, and instructed by a large number of zealous unpaid teachers.

To the Friends, especially, belongs the credit of directing attention to the horrors of the *Slave Trade*, and the wickedness of *Slavery* itself. The general question had already attracted the attention of their brethren in America; and towards the close of the seventeenth century, they had begun to be uneasy about it themselves. In

1727, at the annual meeting of the Society, the Friends emphatically condemned the abominable traffic in negroes by any of their members. In 1758 they confirmed their resolution; and three years afterwards, determined to excommunicate any of their number engaged in the nefarious trade. In 1772 Lord Mansfield gave his famous decision that as soon as a slave set foot on English soil his freedom is assured. In 1773 *William Wilberforce* began his abolitionist career, whilst still a boy at school, by writing to a York paper "in condemnation of the odious traffic in human flesh". In 1783 the Friends petitioned Parliament for its abolition, and in the same year issued an address to the public which was widely circulated. In 1785 *Thomas Clarkson*, then quite a young man, wrote his essay on the question, "Is it right to make slaves of others against their will?" But he could get no one to publish it except a Friend named *William Phillips*. Indeed, it may be said, that the principal promoters of the movement were either members of the Society of Friends themselves or closely associated with them. *Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton* was the brother-in-law of *Priscilla Gurney*, at whose dying request he associated himself with the cause. Moreover, it was in the parlour of *William Phillips*, the publisher (1787), that the celebrated committee of twelve was formed, with *Granville Sharp* as chairman, to promote the object in view; and of these no less than nine were Friends.

Shortly afterwards, the Baptists began to move; and in 1788, two of their members were appointed to convey to the abolition committee their hearty sympathy and support. Other denominations followed; and soon the movement became general amongst earnest Christian people; and besides those already mentioned, such men as *Booth*, *Robinson*, *Porteus*, *Paley* and *Zachary Macaulay*,

proved to the world that, although differing on theological and ecclesiastical questions, they could heartily unite with one another in promoting the common welfare of mankind. In 1791 Wilberforce voiced the public desire by bringing in a Bill to prohibit the further importation of slaves ; but he had the mortification of seeing it rejected by the Parliament. In the following year however (1792), supported by Pitt, he carried a motion for the gradual abolition of the traffic.

CHAPTER X

THE MISSIONARY ERA

FROM THE FORMATION OF THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY TO THE REPEAL OF THE TEST AND CORPORATION ACTS

1792-1828

1. **The Baptist Missionary Society.**—The impetus given to philanthropic work at home, and the movement just commenced on behalf of the Africans liable to be transported across the seas and sold for slaves, had doubtless something to do with exciting a desire to dissipate the darkness of the heathen world. To the Baptists belongs the honour of actually commencing the missionary work of the Free Churches amongst the many millions of idolaters, who dwell in foreign lands. Hitherto, Nonconformists had been mainly occupied in struggling to maintain their own existence, in defending their several forms of Church government, and in developing their respective organisations; but now that their liberties were practically assured, and there was no question of their vitality and vigour, they began to have a higher view of their sacred duty and glorious privilege.

The movement originated, as is often the case in great enterprises, with very humble persons, and was inaugurated in a quiet and unostentatious manner. *William Carey*, a poor shoemaker, who became minister of a

church in Leicester, conceived the idea of establishing a missionary society, and of going abroad himself as a preacher of the gospel to the heathen. But so novel was the project, and so unlikely was it to be seriously entertained, that when the suggestion was made at a meeting in Northampton, old *Mr. Ryland*, one of the senior brethren, sprang to his feet and impatiently exclaimed: "Young man, sit down. When God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do it without your aid or mine"; and even *Andrew Fuller* of Kettering, who proved such a tower of strength to the movement afterwards, was staggered at the idea, and could only say: "If the Lord should make windows in heaven, such a thing might be".

On that memorable occasion, the young man sat down as requested; but it was only to get up again, when another opportunity offered. The fire of the Lord burnt too brightly within him to be easily quenched by the cold water of general indifference, senile torpidity, and official criticism and rebuke. He returned to the subject again and again; and at length, after seven years of incessant effort, by the ardour of his zeal and the passion of his eloquence, he broke down all opposition; and at Kettering, on October 2, 1792, succeeded in forming the *Baptist Missionary Society*. At the meeting there were only twelve ministers present; but a committee of five was appointed to direct the enterprise, of whom Carey was one and Andrew Fuller (who was made secretary) another. A collection was taken, which amounted to the sum of £13 2s. 6d.; and, although many of the ministers in London and other places looked upon the scheme as visionary and foolish, others heartily supported it, and soon more money began to come in. Ere many months had passed, sufficient funds had been collected to make a start, and arrangements were made for sending Carey and his

companion Thomas to India. But the East India Company objecting to the presence of missionaries in their dominions, they were put on shore again after having embarked. At length, the two men secured a passage in a Danish vessel, and sailing for Bengal landed at Calcutta on November 11, 1793. On the arrival of *Marshman* and *Ward* in 1799, a station was established at Serampore in Danish territory; where Carey, by his capacity for acquiring languages, his aptitude for teaching and preaching, and above all, by his singular devotion and perseverance, was able, with the assistance of his faithful and industrious colleagues, to lay the foundation of the work which subsequently proved so eminently successful. The first convert, Krishnu Pal, was baptised December 28, 1800.

2. **The London Missionary Society** was established in 1795 upon a wider basis, being entirely undenominational in its principles. The initiative was taken by *Dr. Bogue*, Congregational minister of Gosport, and by *Dr. T. Haweis*, *John Eyre*, and *Melville Horne*, Evangelical clergymen of the Church of England. A preliminary meeting was held at Baker's Coffee-house in Cornhill, November 24, 1794, when arrangements were made for bringing the matter before the members of the various Churches. A large assembly was summoned, and subsequently most enthusiastic gatherings were held at various places in London from the 22nd to the 24th of September, 1795; when the scheme proposed was adopted, and directors appointed to conduct the affairs of the society. At these services, besides the above-mentioned ministers, *George Burder*, *William Jay*, *Rowland Hill*, *John Love*, and other brethren took part; and the laymen were represented by *Sir Egerton Leigh*, who presided at the first

meeting, and *Joseph Hardcastle*, who became treasurer. A wonderful feeling of unity and love prevailed; and it was hoped that the auspicious event would prove "the funeral of bigotry, and that she would be buried so deep that not a particle of her dust would ever be thrown upon the face of the earth". This most Christian sentiment has not yet been realised, but the society long continued to be a bond of union between different sections of the Church, and still maintains its broad catholic principles. Its first missions were to the South Seas, where it has won some of its most signal triumphs, and where men like *Henry Nott*, who sailed with the first company of missionaries in the ship *Duff*, long continued to labour.

3. Episcopal and Methodist Missionary Societies.

—Notwithstanding the undenominational character of the society so enthusiastically established, and the valuable assistance rendered it by Episcopalian clergymen, it was to be expected, perhaps, that the Evangelical party in the National Church, now becoming more numerous and influential, would desire to have an agency of their own, other than the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel already patronised and fostered by the State. The desire would be strengthened, too, by the fact that the operations of the latter were largely confined to work amongst the English-speaking people in the various colonies of the empire. Accordingly in 1799, the *Church Missionary Society* was formed, for the distinct purpose of evangelising the heathen world. The support and direction of the London Society was then practically left to the Independents (or Congregationalists as they were beginning more frequently to be called) and their friends amongst the other Churches. At the present time

the Society is largely indebted to individuals other than Congregationalists, especially amongst the Presbyterians of England, Scotland and Ireland.

Similarly, the Methodists, who were as yet closely linked to the Establishment, preferred to proceed on their own lines. They had already, under the apostolic direction of *Dr. Coke*, the father of their missions, carried on operations amongst the colonists and negroes of the West Indies, and had attempted something for the Foulahs of Sierra Leone. In 1789, moreover, a kind of *Missionary Committee* had been formed with three missionary members. To aid the work a general collection was made in 1793, and three years later, a system of annual collections was begun. Regular operations amongst the heathen, however, do not appear to have actually commenced till 1811, when four missionaries were sent out to Western Africa, to become the pioneers of so many more, who have most willingly laid down their lives for Christ in that pestilential and deadly region.

But *Dr. Coke* was not satisfied with this effort for Africa: he had set his heart on Asia, and in 1813 he urged the Conference at Liverpool to establish a mission in Ceylon. "I am so fully convinced that it is God's will," he said, "that I had rather be set naked on the coast, and without a friend, than not go there." Conference hesitated: its burdens were so great. But the debate being adjourned, the veteran enthusiast spent the night in prayer, and the next morning gained what has been termed the triumph of his life. The brethren agreed to the scheme, and consented to receive the £6000 he offered to begin the mission. He sailed the following December with six missionaries; but on reaching the Indian Ocean, he was suddenly called to his rest.

4. **The Religious Tract Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society** both had their birth on the premises of Mr. Joseph Hardcastle near London Bridge, whence the work of the London Missionary Society was originally directed. The former, founded in 1799, was the direct outcome of the union to promote the interests of that association; and it was largely the same with the latter, which was set on foot in 1802, and regularly inaugurated in 1804, principally through the exertions of Charles of Bala, an Episcopal clergyman, who had largely promoted the Calvinistic-Methodist movement in Wales, and afterwards himself took part in the first ordination to the ministry of that Church. Both these societies were established on an entirely unsectarian basis; and they have from the beginning rendered most valuable aid in divers ways (as in printing, grants of paper and books, and also money for translations and publications abroad) to the various missionary societies.

It was anticipated that the establishment of such Catholic institutions, working disinterestedly for the general good, would secure the sympathy and help of all classes of Christians; but the anticipation was vain. The High Church clergy saw in them nothing but the possibility of diminishing their power and influence; and they looked upon the idea of being associated on equal terms with Dissenters in any religious undertaking whatever with a feeling approaching to horror. They therefore not only withheld their assistance, but opposed the establishment of both societies, and vehemently attacked their Episcopalian supporters. It was sin, they said, to co-operate with persons whom they were pleased to call "Schismatics," and they considered it most inexpedient to circulate the Scriptures without the Prayer-book. To the work of the *Bible Society* they

particularly objected; "Supply these men [the Dissenters] with Bibles," said one of these bigots, who declared he spoke as a true Churchman, "and you supply them with arms against yourselves". He was certainly right. So bitter was the feeling raised in the minds of the sacerdotal clergy against the Bible Society that the highest dignitary of the Church, his grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, had the temerity to rebuke the Duke of Kent, the father of Queen Victoria, for his unqualified adhesion to that noble institution. The controversy in its bitterest form lasted as long as fifteen years; but during the whole of that period the society found steadfast friends and liberal supporters, and at its close, was still further endeared to the hearts of the people, and enjoyed the support of the greater part of the members of the Established Church. To this day, however, the sacerdotal clergy look askance upon it; and if not openly hostile, are apparently supremely indifferent to its success.

5. **Elementary Education** made some progress during this period, owing mainly to the praiseworthy exertions of *Joseph Lancaster*, a young Friend. He commenced a school in his father's house in Southwark in 1796; and, when his scholars became too numerous, he was wise enough to perceive that the best and most economical method of overtaking the work, was to set the elder and better educated to teach the younger and more ignorant. This system of helping both teachers and taught proved a great success, and the scholars continued to increase in number. Schools conducted on the same principle were established in other parts of London and the country, and before long, attracted general attention. It became quite the fashion

to visit and inspect them, and even his majesty, George III., was graciously pleased to honour them with his distinguished patronage. In 1808 Lancaster had the satisfaction of seeing constituted the society which subsequently received the name of the *British and Foreign School Society*; and which was formed to assist schools of an unsectarian character in the poorest and most needy centres of population. In a comparatively short time a considerable number of these schools were established, and most of them were in a flourishing and prosperous condition.

Again, however, many of the bishops and clergy set themselves to oppose an undenominational scheme. They would rather, it seemed, have had the people continue ignorant, than be instructed by any persons other than those under their own immediate direction. But finding it impossible to check the new movement, they raised the old cry of the "Church in danger"; and scurrilously abused the philanthropist and his friends, who were trying to save the children from ignorance, misery, and sin. "The plan," said one, "is the plan of a Quaker; and Quakerism means nothing but Deism, and a disgusting amalgam of all those anti-Christian heresies and blasphemies which were permitted to disgrace and disturb the Church in her primitive days." When it was found that this method of opposition rather advanced than retarded the movement, and that the day had gone by for open persecution, another plan was tried to check it. A new society was established (1811), to be under the entire control of the clergy; and though its schools are called "National Schools," it began its work, and still carries it on in the interests of the Episcopal Church.¹

¹The official title of the society is "The National Society for educating the children of the poor in the principles of the Church

Some years later (1820), a Bill for the education of the people (the First Education Bill) was introduced into Parliament by Mr. Brougham, by which it was provided that schools should be built and teachers supported by means of a parochial rate. As, however, every schoolmaster was to be a communicant of the Established Church, and nominated by the clergyman; and the clergyman, with the aid of two or three parishioners, was to control the whole course of instruction, the scheme met with uncompromising opposition on the part of the Dissenters, and was ultimately abandoned.

6. Increase of the Free Churches.—By this time nearly all the Free Churches were making considerable progress, the Presbyterians and the Unitarians alone showing signs of weakness or decline. Many of the ministers, as *William Toller*, *Abraham Booth*, *John Foster*, *Robert Hall*, *Samuel Bradburn*, and *Adam Clarke* (besides those already mentioned as being the enthusiastic leaders of the missionary movement), were men of remarkable literary ability or great oratorical powers; and they exercised a large amount of influence over the people. By the indefatigable labours of these, and many other equally devoted and earnest preachers of the gospel, converts continued to multiply, and buildings for their accommodation were one after another erected. Reliable statistics of the period are somewhat difficult to obtain; but a return was called for by the bishops of the buildings used for religious worship in towns containing a thousand inhabitants and upwards, and ordered to be printed in 1811 by the House of Lords. From this it appears that, whereas the number of churches belonging to the Establishment of England”; so that the term “National Schools” given to these sectarian institutions is altogether a misnomer.

lishment in these towns was 1330, the places of worship used by the Free Churches were 1806. Many of the latter, however, would no doubt be comparatively small. But these figures do not give an altogether correct idea of the numerical position of Nonconformity. In 1715 the total number of Dissenting congregations in England and Wales, not including the Quakers, was 1150. In 1808, the Independents, Baptists, and Presbyterians alone numbered 2002; to which must be added many hundreds of Methodist chapels, the aggregate membership of English and Welsh Methodism being at that date certainly not less than 200,000.

7. Separation of Methodism from the Episcopal Church.—After the death of Wesley, the spirit of impatience at the inconveniences and restraints imposed on the societies by their nominal connection with the Establishment made itself more markedly felt; and an agitation for formal separation and real independence was immediately commenced. But a few years passed by before any decided changes were made. The “old plan,” and no alteration, was the watchword of the conference of 1791; and the same decision was arrived at, as the result of having recourse to the lot in the following year. But in 1793 it was resolved that “the societies should have the privilege of the Lord’s Supper, where they unanimously desired it”; and the next year, it was granted to ninety-three societies. The agitation, however, continued, and in 1795 the “Plan of Pacification” was adopted, which under certain conditions, gave ministers the power to administer the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, to bury the dead and to hold services at any time in the day which might be found suitable, instead of between the intervals of the

hours appointed for the regular worship of the State Church. This plan virtually sanctioned separation from the Establishment; although, in granting it, the leaders still disclaimed the idea of actual severance.

The Calvinistic Methodists in Wales were somewhat later in promoting similar changes. A long succession of remarkable revivals took place, and the devoted evangelists were indefatigable in preaching throughout all parts of the country; but these were called "Exhorters" only, and did not administer any of the Sacraments of the Church. The people, however, like their English brethren, were dissatisfied; and in 1810 Thomas Charles, the clergyman who had so zealously promoted the formation of the Bible Society, consented to the ordination of preachers that they might be authorised to perform all the regular offices of the ministry. In the following year this decision was confirmed and acted upon at the meeting of the Association; and from that time Welsh Methodism grew in unity and strength, and made more rapid strides throughout the principality.

8. First Methodist Secessions.—Many members of the English societies were dissatisfied not only at being unable to receive the Sacraments at the hands of their own ministers, but also with the churchified character Wesley had given to Methodism; and especially with the Clericalism which appeared to pervade its government. The distinguished founder, being saturated with lofty High Church ideas of clerical supremacy, had no notion of admitting the laity to any real share of the management of ecclesiastical affairs. All power was vested in the hands of the Conference, or "Legal Hundred" of ministers; and laymen could only make suggestions for their consideration. This position

was very irksome to many preachers and others, who wished for a more popular and democratic constitution ; and these laboured to bring about a reform. They found a leader in *Alexander Kilham* of Epworth, one of Wesley's helpers.

This young preacher had no sympathy with the idea of retaining formal connection with the Church, whilst practically separating from it ; and he viewed with disapprobation the endeavour of the Methodist ministers to keep the management of affairs entirely in their own hands. He contended for unrestricted liberty of worship, the possession of all Church privileges as regards the Sacraments, and the right of the people to send to Conference lay representatives, who should share equally with the ministers in their power of management. Like some other reformers, however, he was probably not so prudent and considerate in the advocacy of his principles as he might have been ; for in 1792 he was censured by Conference, and four years afterwards was actually expelled. The cause was then taken up more heartily by others ; a memorial was presented to the leaders in the same year (1796), and at the Conference held in Leeds in 1797, a formal demand was made for lay representation. This being peremptorily rejected, a secession took place ; and immediately after, the *Methodist New Connexion* was formed in the same town. A constitution was adopted in the year following, and there were then 5000 adherents of the society. It is necessarily a more liberal body than the older community, though its doctrines and order are very similar. The main difference consists in admitting to Conference lay representatives and ministers in equal proportion. These are chosen by the different circuits. The members of the Conference again elect for life a small number

of senior brethren (twenty-four) as guardian representatives. The laymen share in the management of all business, both sacred and secular.

The next secession was that of the *Primitive Methodists*, so called because, in their judgment, they reverted to the original or primitive methods of Wesley and his followers, by "preaching in the open air, holding camp meetings to promote revivals, singing through the street, praying and preaching anywhere and everywhere they could, so as to save souls". Some of their irregular proceedings had become distasteful to the ministers of the older community (now called *Wesleyan Methodists* to distinguish them from the New Connexion), many of whom were apparently more conservative in their notions of order and propriety than Wesley himself. These elders induced the Conference to denounce the holding of a great camp meeting, May 31, 1807, on Mow Cop hill on the borders of Cheshire and Staffordshire. It was promoted by *Hugh* and *James Bourne*, and was attended by thousands of people. The two enthusiastic brethren were refused their tickets of membership, and virtually driven from the society. Next a class leader, named *William Clowes*, was suspended for his sympathy and co-operation in the movement; and in the same year (1810) ten persons, who had been converted at a village service in Stanley, were refused admission to the society. These with Clowes and the Bournes formed the nucleus of the new community, which from that time continued to grow and flourish. Its members were mostly poor and uneducated; yet they were thoroughly devoted to its interests, and were, moreover, always ready to make great sacrifices to promote them. In their Conference the Primitive Methodists have two laymen to one minister; and they were

amongst the first to encourage the public preaching of women.¹

The *Bible Christians* can scarcely be said to have seceded from Methodism. They were gathered into congregations by the arduous labours of *William Bryan*, a local preacher in Cornwall; and came into existence as a separate body in 1819, through the want of a little wisdom on the part of the Methodist authorities, and the lack of elasticity in their system. Bryan and his converts being refused admission into the society, on account of certain irregularities of form in connection with the application of their leader, they established an association of their own. At one of their earlier meetings they were called by some of their hearers *Bible Christians*; and they saw no reason to disown the title, though by retaining it, they do not insinuate that other systems are unscriptural. Their Conference is composed of an equal number of ministers and laymen. There is little other difference between them and the Wesleyans; but they receive the Lord's Supper in a sitting posture.

The *Independent Methodists* separated themselves in 1810. Their chief characteristic is their rejection of a paid ministry. In 1816 a division took place amongst the Methodists in Ireland; but since the adoption of more liberal measures by the parent society, the two communities have reunited and become one.

9. Temporary decline of Political Dissent.—During the first part of this period Free Churchmen were less assertive, and were not so mindful as they

¹ Excepting the Quakers, who have always consistently maintained that "in Christ there is neither male nor female". There were several women preachers among the early Wesleyans; but their ministrations were forbidden by Conference in 1803.

might have been of the necessity for continuing the struggle for their full religious rights. To a certain extent doubtless they were affected by the wave of Toryism which swept over almost the whole nation, after the perpetration of the later follies and crimes of the French Revolution, and which had not yet spent its force. It was still unpopular, if not dangerous, to incur the suspicion of being in sympathy with Republican France, by the expression of Liberal sentiments; and even some of the prominent Nonconformist ministers were Tory by conviction, and were consequently opposed to further agitation. Moreover, the enthusiasm with which the Nonconformists threw themselves into the new evangelistic movements and philanthropic efforts, did not leave them much time to attend to political duties; and probably, many were unwilling to incur the danger of coming into collision with their friends in the Church, who were uniting so heartily with them in various departments of Christian service. They could not forget the valuable assistance rendered to the undenominational missionary enterprise, the union which existed for the dissemination of the Bible and Christian literature, and the help given in many ways to the common cause; and they were accordingly disinclined to do anything calculated to interfere with the harmony which prevailed. Yet that harmony was more apparent than real; and it imposed a silence on the part of Dissenters with regard to their fundamental principles, which was unworthy of them, and which could not possibly be always maintained.

The Episcopalians, on the other hand, were not bound in any way; and some even of the most devoted and friendly of the evangelical clergy could by no means see their way to treat the Nonconformists with whom they were occasionally associated as their ecclesiastical equals.

The High Church ecclesiastics, meanwhile, continued their most bitter and uncompromising opponents, and did not relax their efforts to repress Dissent. Indeed, it was rather from lack of courage than want of will, that they hesitated to put once more into force some of those persecuting Acts which still disgraced the Statute Book. Free Churchmen need constantly to be reminded that it is not altogether wise to be too trustful, and is never safe to sacrifice to present expediency the vigorous and judicious prosecution of their just and rightful claims; inasmuch as their enemies are often only too ready to take undue advantage of misplaced confidence or quiescent indifference.

10. Attempt to restrict the liberty of preaching.

—After several premonitory indications of the actual state of affairs, the Dissenters were awakened from their dreams of peaceful union, or startled from their apathy, by an event which proved how eager the extreme clerical party were to hinder their progress and keep them in a position of inferiority. In February, 1810, Viscount Sidmouth called attention in the House of Lords to the returns of preachers and places of worship, which had been licensed between 1760 and 1808; and in the following year brought in a Bill to check the facility with which persons entered the Dissenting ministry. He said that their practice was an abuse of the liberty they enjoyed, and affirmed that cobblers, tailors, pig-drovers, and chimney-sweepers had assumed the sacred office. Accordingly, he proposed that no one should be allowed to obtain a certificate as a minister, unless he were recommended by six respectable householders of his own denomination.

Apparently this was a reasonable, and certainly not a very reactionary proposal; but the Dissenters were of opinion that, if it were accepted and passed into law, it

would probably be used to hinder the work of the Free Churches in the villages, which were largely dependent on the services of local preachers. There can be little doubt, that the intention was first to suppress these local preachers; and, if that could be effected, to follow up the advantage by further restraints on Nonconformity. All sections therefore, including the Methodists (who now for the first time joined in religious political effort for the common good), organised a strenuous opposition; and in forty-eight hours procured against the proposal 336 petitions from their congregations in Middlesex and the adjacent counties. On the day appointed for the second reading of the Bill more petitions poured in. They were so numerous that they lay in heaps on the floor of the House, and obstructed their lordships in the discharge of their duties. It was impossible under these circumstances to pass the Bill; and after some discussion, mainly in favour of the preservation of full religious liberty, it was withdrawn.

11. More Concessions to Dissenters.—The attempt to interfere with the liberty of preaching not only ended in failure, but was the means of securing some further concessions to Free Church demands. A few years afterwards, the *Protestant Society for the Protection of Religious Liberty* was formed, having especially in view the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, and the reform of the Marriage, Burial and University Laws; but it also looked after the general interest of Nonconformists, and defended such as even then were prosecuted in country districts for violations of the old Five Mile and Conventicle Acts. For example, £90 was recovered from persons found at a prayer meeting, and at another meeting a man was fined £20 for offering public petitions to the Almighty. Within a year, through the efforts of

the society and the Dissenting Deputies, these Acts were removed from the Statute Book.

In 1813 after great exertions, mostly on the part of Free Church representatives, and in spite of a stubborn resistance by the more worldly minded directors of the East India Company (who sneered with the "*Edinburgh Review*" at the "Consecrated Cobblers," who had undertaken to convert a continent of heathen nations), the right to reside and preach in India was secured for Christian missionaries. Then in the same year a Bill was passed abrogating the law which made it a penal offence to deny the doctrine of the Trinity. This was of the greatest importance to Unitarians, who up to that time existed on sufferance, and always ran the risk of being prosecuted and made to suffer the severest punishment, short of death, which the law could inflict.

In 1824 the sympathies of the people were roused on behalf of the missionaries in the West Indies, who were suffering much persecution at the hands of the planters and their friends, the colonial officials, because of their efforts to instruct and elevate the slaves. One of their number, *John Smith* of the London Missionary Society, had met with most barbarous treatment in Demerara, which resulted in his death. Falsely accused of complicity in a negro rebellion, he and his wife were roughly seized, and thrown into a loathsome prison, where they suffered greatly. After a while, the persecuted missionary was tried by a court martial, and sentenced to be hanged. His enemies, however, did not dare to carry out the sentence; but thrust him into one of the filthiest and most malodorous of the felons' cells, where the fœtid air of the place speedily increased his illness. Here he remained in solitary confinement for seven weeks, when death put an end to his miseries

on February 6, 1824. When the news of Mr. Smith's arrest, imprisonment, and sentence arrived in England, the just indignation of the people compelled the Government to give immediate attention to the case, and to direct that the unfortunate man should be sent home. The order was received, alas! too late; but the interference of the authorities, and their opposition to the colonial designs against the missionaries, were the means of eventually improving the position of these courageous friends of a down-trodden race.

In 1827, a practical step was taken towards affording a liberal education to Nonconformists, as they were still excluded by ecclesiastical tests from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. This was the foundation of University College, London, which at first bore the name of "London University". The college became the nucleus of the later national institution so designated. It was commenced largely through the advocacy of Free Churchmen, and in the face of resolute opposition from the old and exclusive Universities.

12. Final struggle for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts.—By means of the Protestant Society for the Protection of Religious Liberty, and their respective representatives, the Free Churches kept the question of religious liberty well before the public during the next few years; and they secured the adhesion to their cause of several well-known politicians of Liberal sympathies. On March 26, 1827, a largely attended Conference discussed the best means of securing the repeal of the Test Acts; for, notwithstanding the practice of passing an annual Act of Indemnity to protect Dissenters against their penal provisions, they still pressed heavily on conscientious persons. It was agreed to place

a Bill in the hands of Lord John Russell, and to organise an agitation throughout the country for its support. Arrangements to that end were accordingly made, and enthusiastically carried out.

Early in the following year, Lord Russell asked leave to introduce the measure, and immediately petitions in its favour from all parts of the country began to arrive. It was brought in on the 26th of February; and the noble lord in the course of an animated speech declared, that while he could not go so far as to agree with the abstract principle that there should be perfect religious liberty for all, he yet thought that in this case the Dissenters were making a just and legitimate demand. The proposal was, as a matter of course, vigorously opposed; but it passed the second reading by a majority of forty, and was then considered in committee. Long and acrimonious debates followed. It was ultimately agreed that the Sacramental Test should be abolished, on the understanding that all persons seeking or holding office in any corporation, or any position of trust under Government, should in lieu thereof subscribe a declaration that he believes in the authenticity and truth of the canonical books of Scripture, and that he swears to do nothing to the injury of the Established Church. This was by no means a generous surrender, and did not give to Free Churchmen all that they desired and were entitled to; but, when the measure was actually passed, the provision did away with the profanation of the sacred ordinance for worldly and selfish ends, and Dissenters were finally relieved from pains and penalties for the conscientious infraction of an odious and iniquitous law. Accordingly much rejoicing followed, and a great gathering of the Friends of Religious Liberty was held to celebrate the auspicious event.

CHAPTER XI

WELCOME REFORMS

FROM THE REPEAL OF THE TEST AND CORPORATION ACTS TO THE INAUGURATION OF THE MOVEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS EQUALITY

1828-1856

1. **Roman Catholic Emancipation** was the next step towards the attainment of Religious Equality. Owing to a general belief in the dangerous and unscrupulous character of many of the Romish priests, and the memory of such events as the Marian martyrdoms, the Massacre of St. Bartholomew in France, the wanton slaughter of the Protestants in Ireland, and the Gunpowder and other plots to set up a Popish sovereign in England, various repressive Acts had been passed, and were still upon the Statute Book. Many of these laws were undoubtedly cruel, and went far beyond the requirements of prudence and care for the safety of the realm. They were moreover ill adapted to their designed end. They limited civil rights by a distinctly religious test, instead of treating Romanists as persons owing allegiance to a hostile foreign power. These statutes would long since have been repealed, had it not been for this widespread feeling of mistrust and fear in which all classes of the community participated. As time went on, however, and the danger of Papal dominion diminished, men recognised the in-

ability of the priests to do serious mischief, and began to think of the duty and advisability of removing the disabilities under which they and their followers laboured, and of abrogating the penal laws against them.

Some progress was made in 1780, when Sir George Saville succeeded in getting a Bill passed which gave relief to such Romanists as would swear allegiance to the Sovereign and abjure the Pretender; and would repudiate, moreover, the generally received Papal doctrines—that it is lawful to put persons to death on pretence of being heretics—that no faith is to be kept with heretics—that princes excommunicated may be put to death—and that the Pope is entitled to exercise jurisdiction in the realm. But the attempt to pass a similar measure for Scotland failed. A fanatical outburst of Protestant feeling was the result, which subsequently extended to England, and culminated in the “Lord George Gordon Riots”. Further relief was afforded in 1791; but it was deemed insufficient, and much dissatisfaction was felt. The Irish were especially aggrieved, and this amongst other causes provoked the rebellion in 1798.

In the meantime, the English Romanists were being excluded from Parliament, and prevented from enjoying numerous offices, franchises, and civil rights, by the enforcement of a declaration against transubstantiation, the invocation of saints, and the sacrifice of the mass. Several attempts to remove these disabilities were made in the earlier part of the century; and in 1825 a Bill for that purpose passed the House of Commons, but was rejected by the Lords. After the repeal of the Test Act, however, penal laws against Roman Catholics were felt to be absurd; and indeed the state of things amongst the Catholics of Ireland constituted a danger, before which even an English Tory Government quailed.

Accordingly, in 1829, the Duke of Wellington brought in a Bill to promote Catholic Emancipation, which successfully passed both Houses, and received the royal assent. This, however, like the Bill for the repeal of the Test Acts, was not a complete measure ; and the Romanists were still excluded from some of the principal offices of State. But great satisfaction was felt for the large amount of relief secured, and *Daniel O'Connell*, the Irish leader, publicly thanked the Nonconformists for the valuable assistance they had rendered.

2. Free Church Literature and Political Reform.—Anxious that the principles upon which the Free Churches are based should become more widely known, some of their representatives established in 1831 the *Society for promoting Ecclesiastical Knowledge*, under the guidance of Dr. Bennett. Arrangements were made for the collection, publication, and dissemination of the requisite information ; and much valuable and interesting material was issued from the press.

The attention of Free Churchmen was also called to the political state of the country ; and they energetically availed themselves of the opportunity afforded them of assisting to secure the passage of the Reform Bill of 1832, which gave every promise, not only of benefiting the community at large, but of extending and consolidating their own liberties. It was obstructed, like most other Radical but just proposals, by the Spiritual Lords of the Upper House. This, however, only exasperated the people, and made them more determined that a thorough reform should come. The "*Times*" newspaper, which then advocated Liberal principles, was indignant, and pertinently inquired : " Will no question occur to the people of England touching my lords the bishops ? Will nobody

ask what business they have in Parliament at all? What right have these Tories *ex officio* to make or mar laws for the people?" and it bluntly added: "Let them confine themselves to the souls of the people, and begin with their own". Wisely bowing before the storm they had helped to create, their lordships withdrew their opposition, and suffered the measure to pass.

3. Agitation for the abolition of Church Rates.— A compulsory levy on the parish for the incidental charges of public worship had been usual from Anglo-Saxon times. An agitation for its abolition was commenced in the midst of a somewhat bitter controversy on the Anti-Christian character of a State Church. This was occasioned by the outspoken utterances of *Thomas Binney*, the Independent minister of the King's Weigh-house Chapel. Many cities and suburban parishes refused to make a rate; and in some of the places where the rate was levied sundry persons refused to pay, notably John Thorogood of Chelmsford, John Childs of Bungay, William Baines of Leicester, and John Simonds of Aylesbury. Their imprisonment caused general indignation, and the clergy incurred not a little public odium. The churchwardens of Braintree denied the right of a majority of ratepayers to refuse a rate for Church purposes; the question was fought out in the Law Courts, and, after thirteen years' litigation, it was decided against them. In 1834 the first of a series of Bills for the Abolition of Church Rates was brought into Parliament by Mr. Divett; but, as there was no chance of its being properly considered, it was withdrawn. Two years later, a *Church Rate Abolition Society* was formed; and in 1837, at the instance of the Liberal Government of Lord John Russell, a resolution was moved, that the payment for Church

purposes should be met out of Church lands and pew rents. It was carried, but only by a narrow majority; and the Premier afterwards announced, that he had no intention of bringing the matter before the Upper House. This was the prelude to its abandonment by the Whigs, and their opposition to any further change for some years. It was brought before the Commons again in 1853 by Sir William Clay, but failed to become law.

4. **The Oxford Tractarian Movement.**—The political reform effected in 1832 excited no little alarm amongst the clergy of the Establishment; and had much to do with the “Tractarian Movement” for the maintenance of sacerdotal pretensions, and the revival of superstitions which had been rejected at the Reformation. It was felt that the Church was losing its hold of the people; and that in order to retain it, something must be done to teach them that the institution is based entirely upon apostolic authority, and that the priesthood is at once mysterious and divine. In 1833 John Keble preached a sermon on “National Apostasy,” in which he complained of parliamentary interference with the affairs of the Church, and protested against the political and religious liberty which prevailed. Shortly afterwards, appeared the “*Tracts for the Times*,” in which the writers insisted on the apostolic authority of the Church, and urged a return to the ornate ceremonial and sacerdotal teaching of mediæval times. Moreover, they ingeniously argued that the articles of the Protestant Church of England might be subscribed with a safe conscience by those who in reality held the distinctive doctrines of the Papacy. Much discussion and excitement ensued; and before long, *Dr. Newman* seceded to Roman Catholicism, subsequently followed by *Dr. Manning*. Thus the Establishment, which is often

spoken of as the “Bulwark of Protestantism,” had furnished Rome with two notable converts, who afterwards became its most eminent modern English cardinals. *Mr. Keble*, *Dr. Pusey*, and other Tractarian leaders remained in the Church which had nursed them; but they continued to carry on their Anti-Protestant crusade with an increasing amount of success, to the annoyance and distress of the Evangelical clergy of the Anglican Communion.

5. Changes in Registration and Marriage Laws.

—Although the Nonconformists had failed to obtain exemption from the payment of Church rates, some other concessions were secured. Amongst these were alterations for the better in the Registration of Births, Deaths, and Marriages, and in the Marriage Laws. Previous to 1836, the births of Dissenters’ children were not officially registered, and the only means of legally proving the dates were by entries in family Bibles, and by voluntary registers kept by ministers. Dissenters could be married only in their respective parish churches, and with no other service than that of the Church of England. In that year, however, a uniform system of registration was adopted; and it was also enacted, that members of the Dissenting Communities could be married either at the office of the registrar or at their own places of worship, if duly licensed for the purpose—that official being present at the ceremony.

6. Opposition to Factories Education Bill and Roman Catholic Endowments.

—Having obtained these changes in their favour, and being, moreover, much absorbed in the prosecution of the Anti-Slavery movement and the carrying on of their own denominational affairs,

the Free Churches were disposed to rest and be thankful ; but they were again stirred to action by the course taken by the political friends of their ecclesiastical opponents. Sir James Graham promoted a Bill for the education of children employed in factories, by the provisions of which very unfair advantages were to be given to the clergy of the Establishment, making them virtual directors of the projected schools. The Nonconformists were surprised and alarmed ; and still more so, when it was found that Lord John Russell and the Liberal Ministry they supported were expecting that they would cheerfully sacrifice their interest to Episcopal supremacy. Being deserted once more, they found it necessary to defend themselves ; and so vigorous was their opposition, that the obnoxious Bill was eventually withdrawn. On the other hand, an attempt was made in conjunction with a large party in the Church to prevent an increase in the annual payment to the Romanist College of Maynooth. From the desire to conciliate the Irish, the ministry persisted in their proposal, and ultimately carried their measure.

7. Origin of the Liberation Society.—The constant endeavours of the representatives of the Establishment to maintain and extend its supremacy and privileges, directed the minds of the staunchest and most democratic of Free Churchmen more closely to its position and claims ; and it was felt by them that a State Church was not only wrong in principle, and inimical to the highest interests of the nation, but also unfair in practice to those who were conscientiously separated from it. Equality of religious privilege and opportunity, as well as civil and religious liberty, they thought should be the birthright of every Englishman. Hence in 1844, the *Anti-State Church Association* was established to secure

the liberation of religion from State Patronage and Control.

This association, subsequently styled the *Liberation Society*, has ever since held in London a triennial conference, at which its position and prospects, and collateral questions, are discussed. The first conference was held in 1847, and the first subject to which it directed its attention was the *Regium Donum*; the continued receipt of which (now that it was no longer a royal bounty, but a parliamentary grant) was felt to be inconsistent with Free Church principles. As the result of the movement then inaugurated, the English grant enjoyed by the Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists was discontinued in 1852. In the following year, the executive committee had the pleasure of announcing the return of forty Protestant Dissenters to the House of Commons; and preparations were begun to renew the Church Rate Struggle, and to take the first distinct step towards Disestablishment.

8. Baptist and Congregational Unions.—The Baptists had succeeded in 1813 in uniting their churches into an association for the promotion of fraternal intercourse, and the advancement of their denominational interests; but the Congregationalists delayed so doing till 1832. In the previous year a provisional committee met in London, and resolved to invite representatives from the various country associations to discuss the question of a general union of all Congregational churches in England and Wales. These came together in the following May, and after some discussion it was determined to form a regular union. But inasmuch as all the churches, like those of the Baptist persuasion, believed in their separate and individual independence, the

union could not be so close, nor the constitution so rigid and inelastic as that of most other bodies.

The question of creed formed a preliminary difficulty. Still, it was thought practicable to frame a theological basis of union, which could be generally accepted by all the members; though it was necessary to let it be understood that subscription to it could never be made a test of membership, nor could its acceptance be enforced by pains or penalties. At the annual meeting held in 1833, such a basis was adopted; but the independence of each congregation in matters of faith and discipline was clearly recognised. It was, moreover, distinctly stated as an article of belief "That the power of a Christian Church is purely spiritual, and should in no way be corrupted by a union with the Temporal or Civil power".

9. Litigation respecting Lady Hewley's Charity.

—About this time the Congregationalists and Unitarians were considerably excited in regard to the right administration of Lady Hewley's Charity. That excellent lady had in 1704 executed a deed conveying a valuable property to trustees, for the use of "poor and godly ministers of Christ's gospel," and for other religious purposes. In course of time the distribution of the funds had fallen into the hands of the Unitarians, who employed them for the advantage of their own denomination. Exception was taken to this by the Congregationalists, who also disputed their right to many of the old Presbyterian chapels. Litigation was commenced in 1830; and in 1842, the House of Lords decided that orthodox Dissenters alone were entitled to be trustees of the charities, and to administer the funds. This judgment greatly alarmed the Unitarians, who saw themselves in danger of being deprived of some two hundred chapels in which they and

their ancestors had long worshipped. To prevent a further agitation over this seeming act of injustice, the Government under Sir Robert Peel brought in and passed the *Dissenting Chapels Act* (1844), which provided that the usage of twenty-five years should be taken as conclusive evidence of the right of any congregation to possession of their place of worship, and of the schools, burial-grounds, and endowments pertaining thereto.

10. Presbyterian Disruption.—During the eighteenth century several secessions from the Church of Scotland had taken place. From the first, some “United Societies” of Covenanters, or “Cameronians,” had been dissatisfied with the Revolution Settlement; and constituted a *Reformed Presbyterian Church*, independent of the State. In 1730 John Glas, a minister of Tealing, near Dundee, maintained that all national establishments of religion are unlawful and inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity. He became the founder of a number of churches formed on Congregational principles. These afterwards took the name of Sandemanian, from *Robert Sandeman*, a son-in-law of Glas. They cherished some doctrinal peculiarities respecting the nature of faith, and insisted on a plurality of elders in every congregation. They still subsist, but are, however, a very small body.

The administration of the obnoxious law of patronage, which had been restored by the reactionary Government of Queen Anne in 1712, was the occasion for the secession led by *Ebenezer Erskine* in 1733, and the formation of the *Associate Presbytery* or *Secession Kirk*. So displeased, moreover, were the people at having unacceptable ministers thrust upon them, that a further secession took place in 1752, which resulted in the establishment of the *Relief Church*. These two bodies combined in

1847, and became known as the *United Presbyterian Church*, consisting of several hundred congregations.

In 1843 arose the body calling itself the *Evangelical Union*, which consisted of persons who found themselves excluded from the Secession Church by reason of their adoption of the "Remonstrant" or "Arminian" Theology. The union was speedily reinforced by members similarly cut off from fellowship with Independent Churches in Scotland. For half a generation the theological controversy raged with much bitterness; but more than fifty years later, in 1896, the Evangelical Union was amalgamated with the *Congregational Union of Scotland*, the more liberal theology having become almost universally prevalent.

But these secessions were but trivial compared with the Disruption which was now at hand. The controversy on Established *versus* Voluntary Churches, which had continued for years, and which had become more and more embittered as the time wore on, had doubtless prepared the way for this historic event; but the immediate cause was the exercise by the State of its statutory right to govern and control the Church, especially as regards the appointment of ministers by patrons or "heritors," irrespective of the wishes of the people. The question was practically the same as had led to the "Original Secession" and the "Relief" movement; only that in those cases the dissentients were few, while in this the grievance was recognised by the General Assembly. In 1842 it passed a Veto Act authorising congregations to refuse objectionable appointments. The assembly declared, moreover, that unless spiritual independence were granted, separation was inevitable. The Act being declared illegal, and the claim of independence rejected, the crisis came in the following year (1843);

when, at the meeting of the General Assembly, *Dr. Welsh*, the ex-moderator, handed a protest to the queen's commissioner; and he and *Dr. Chalmers* led a long procession of their brethren, four hundred and seventy-four in number, out of the Church to Canonmills, and there constituted the *Free Church of Scotland*.

This noble conduct naturally led to much hardship and suffering, especially amongst some of the country ministers, whose followers were either too few or too poor to properly support them; and in several cases exposure and privation brought aged brethren to their death. Congregations too had their share of trouble from persecuting landlords: land on which to build churches was often refused them; and they were sometimes driven from the roads and the fields, and forced to meet on the sea-shore below high water-mark, when the tide was out.

But the new organisation soon made wonderful progress. It sent out an army of collectors, and created a Sustentation Fund for the ministers thus deprived of their livelihood. "A hundred thousand pounds was subscribed for building churches before the day of the Disruption, and five hundred of them were built in the first year. Mansees were also erected; schools put up for the schoolmasters (for they too had been obliged to leave the parish schools); colleges were instituted for theological students, under professors now excluded by law from the universities; and a Home Mission or Church Extension Fund was founded, through the influence of which the number of pastoral charges has been almost doubled." Not satisfied with this, the Free Church extended its energetic benevolence in various schemes of usefulness over the whole land, and devoted itself most enthusiastically to the missionary cause. By a subsequent union with the *Reformed*

Presbyterian Church, it became rightful heir to the historic traditions of the Ancient Covenanters.

Meanwhile the Presbyterian Church in England was beginning to recover from its long depression. A separate and independent Synod was formed in 1836, and completed by the adhesion of other Presbyteries in 1842, comprising in all sixty-three congregations. Amongst the ministers were *Professors Lorimer* and *McCrie*, and *Dr. James Hamilton*. Hearty attention was given to the missionary cause, and in 1847 the Church had the honour of sending out to China, as its first agent, the apostolic and saintly *W. C. Burns*.

11. Other Religious Communities came into existence or made themselves more conspicuous about this time. The *New Jerusalem Church* had a number of representatives. This society was formed about 1788 by admirers of the mystical and visionary *Emmanuel Swedenborg*; and accepted the system of theosophy, Christology, and eschatology unfolded in his writings, or deduced from Scripture by his mystical Science of Correspondence, as the True Christian Religion. Another organisation grew out of the teaching of the eloquent and erratic *Edward Irving*, for some time minister of the Scotch Church in Regent Square (1822-1832). This was termed the *Catholic and Apostolic Church*, principally because of its alleged gifts of tongues and of healing. Its leading tenet is an enthusiastic millenarianism. After Irving's death, it accepted the guidance of twelve "Restored Apostles," and developed a sacerdotal hierarchy and an elaborate ritual.

But of these new communities the one which spread most rapidly, and has since exercised the greatest amount of influence, is that of the *Brethren*, commonly called the

Plymouth Brethren. Properly speaking, they have no organised bond of union; the different congregations are entirely separate and independent, and the members repudiate the idea of belonging to a sect. They rather deem it their especial mission to call out the "Lord's People" from all the sects. But there is naturally some intercommunion; and, for all practical purposes, the Brethren form another denomination. They are subdivided, moreover, into several parties, some of which refuse to hold fellowship with each other, regarding any diversity of opinion as incompatible with loyalty to the "Truth". They are strictly evangelical, and mostly hold pre-millenarian views. They "break bread" every Sabbath, and usually practise believers' baptism. They refuse to recognise any humanely devised form of Church government or any official or paid ministry; and such as devote themselves wholly to the work of the gospel are supported, if necessary, by unsolicited voluntary contributions. *John Nelson Darby* founded the first congregation in 1830.

During this period other secessions from the Methodist body took place. One in 1835 originated the *Wesleyan Association*, which included several smaller communities; and another in 1849 resulted in the *Wesleyan Reform Association* (1850). These secessions were caused by differences of opinion on points of Church government, and the unwillingness of several ministers to submit to the regulations of Conference. The two societies united in 1857 and became the *Methodist Free Church*, which is now a large and powerful body, and is especially numerous in the manufacturing districts. They and the Bible Christians are, apparently, the most liberal and progressive of the various sections of the Methodist Church. Circuit independency, and freedom of representation in

the Annual Assembly, are two of their most prominent traits in the organisation of their respective Churches.

Besides these Nonconformist organisations, mention must be made of two Dissident Episcopal Communities. The *Free Church of England* repudiates the historical succession of bishops, regarding the episcopate as a distinction of "office not of order". It originated in 1844, as a counteracting movement to Tractarianism at Oxford; and holds itself free to preach in any parish, use a revised Prayer-book, associate the laity in the government of the Church, and hold communion with other Christians. It has annexed several churches of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. The *Reformed Episcopal Church* retains the historical succession through an American seceded bishop; not as in itself necessary or important, but that the validity of its ministerial acts may be unimpeachable by those who think otherwise. Both communities, however, are at present comparatively small and weak.

12. Missionary Enterprise.—These divisions were in many respects to be deplored, especially as they led to considerable waste of energy in competing and overlapping organisations; yet in other respects they worked for good. They served as a stimulus and incentive to individual enterprise and exertion, and left the various sections of the Church to work for the general good, each in its own way. The new communities threw themselves with youthful ardour into the cause they had at heart; whilst the older denominations, deprived of some portion of their strength, determined not to be left behind. In nothing was their zeal more manifest than in their philanthropic efforts for the welfare of mankind.

The teachings of the agents of the London, Baptist, and

Wesleyan Missionary Societies in the West Indies, in spite of the fierce opposition of the planters, had begun to make some change in the moral condition of the negroes under their charge. Moreover, their distressing experiences of persecution, and their brave and emphatic testimony as to the iniquities of slavery, accelerated the total prohibition of the slave trade, and the final abolition of the dreadful system itself. In 1808 the former had become illegal, and in 1838 the slaves obtained complete freedom.

The missionary cause received a great impetus from the successes of the *London Missionary Society*, and the cheering testimonies of some of its most eminent missionaries. The work in the South Seas was particularly encouraging, notwithstanding the preliminary difficulties attendant on the establishment of the mission, and the long and weary period of waiting before any fruit of toil appeared. In 1834 *John Williams* came home to tell the wonderful story of the building of the "*Messenger of Peace*" in Raratonga, and the miracles of grace she had enabled the native missionaries to accomplish in Samoa, and other groups of heathen islands. Ten years before, *Robert Morrison* had arrived from China to describe the way in which he and his colleague *Robert Milne* had been enabled to gain a footing in that seemingly impenetrable land by the success of their literary labours. In 1839 *Rafàravàry* and her fellow-refugees from Madagascar were in England to testify to the constancy of the martyrs in their native country, and their own providential escapes from the vengeance of the persecuting queen. In the same year *Robert Moffat* had returned from his lonely post in the wilds of Africa with the translation of the New Testament for the Bechuanas; and was engaged in relating in simple and pathetic language his wonderful experiences

amongst savage tribes, and the strange triumphs of the gospel in the case of the once dreaded Africaner, and others of his wild and warlike race. Such various testimonies from the lands of darkness were a great encouragement to Christian people, and made them more enthusiastic in endeavouring to send to these distant places the cheering light of the gospel.

Nor were the labours of other missionaries less successful, although at that time they were not brought so prominently before the public. The *Baptists* had their *Carey*, *Marshman* and *Ward* busily employed on the languages of India; *Philippo*, *Burchell*, and *Knibb* were patiently struggling with evil, and working laboriously on behalf of the negroes in the West Indies; and *Saker* was manfully bearing up, under moral and physical difficulties, on the fever-stricken coast of West Africa. The *Wesleyan Methodists* were rejoicing over the conquests of Fiji by *Calvert*, *Hunt*, and their fellow-helpers; whilst those of the *New Connexion*, who had not yet sent missionaries to the heathen world, were grateful for the faithful labours of their brave *John Addyman* amongst the settlers of the backwoods of Canada. The *Free Church of Scotland*, too, was honoured by the educational enterprise of *Dr. Duff* in India; and the *Presbyterian Church in England* by the evangelistic work of *W. C. Burns* in China. These and many others, by their arduous and self-sacrificing labours in the field abroad, and their eloquent and impassioned addresses amongst the people at home, made it impossible for the Free Churches to forget their duty to the heathen nations in the wide wide world.

Moreover, the spiritual necessities of their fellow-countrymen in the various colonies of the empire were also remembered, and missionaries were despatched to their aid. It does not fall within the scope of this book

to give any account of the labours of these devoted men, or to describe in detail the results obtained. Suffice it to say that the flourishing condition of the Free Churches in the colonies to-day is largely owing to the assistance rendered in past years by those of like faith with them in the old country.

13. Numerical Progress.—Hitherto, considerable difficulty had been experienced in ascertaining the number of the adherents of the various religious denominations, and their relative numerical position was not certainly known; but in 1851 a census was taken in England and Wales on the initiative of Major Graham, the Registrar-General, which practically set the matter at rest. When the statistics were published in 1854, together with an exhaustive report from the compiler, Mr. Horace Mann, they created general surprise amongst the people at the revealed growth of the Free Churches, and not a little indignation on the part of the more zealous adherents of the Establishment.

These partisans, proud of their superior privileged position, were deeply offended that the "National" Church should be put on the same footing in an official table of statistics as the "Sects," and that the worshippers amongst them should prove nearly equal to the total number of those who frequented the buildings belonging to the Establishment.

The result came out thus :—

Worshippers in the State Church	3,773,474
„ of other Denominations	3,487,558

These different communities, including the first named, numbered thirty-seven, besides nine which were foreign. Substantially, however, they could be reduced to fourteen, of some of which there were several varieties, as Presby-

terians (four), Baptists (five), Methodists (seven). As regards the proportion of accommodation provided, the following tables furnish an index:—

Accommodation for Public Worship.

	Buildings.	Sittings.
State Church	14,077	5,317,915
All other Denominations	20,390	4,894,648

Attendance at Public Worship.

	Morning.	Afternoon.	Evening.
State Church	2,541,244	1,890,764	860,543
All other Denominations	2,106,238	1,293,371	2,203,906
	<hr/> 4,647,482	<hr/> 3,184,135	<hr/> 3,064,449

Mr. Mann concluded from the statistics that this accommodation was totally inadequate to the needs of 58 per cent. of the population, the estimated number which ought to attend public worship; and that on census Sunday 5,288,294 persons able to be present, at least once, neglected the opportunity. A profound impression was produced in the religious world by these sad facts; and immediate steps were taken to furnish further accommodation, and to induce the people to avail themselves of it. The parochial system stood somewhat in the way of aggressive work on the part of the Evangelical Clergy; but Free Churchmen, not being in any way bound by restrictive ecclesiastical regulations, felt themselves more at liberty to adopt other than ordinary methods of reaching the careless and indifferent (such as theatre and music hall services), and were consequently more successful amongst the masses.

CHAPTER XII

PROGRESS TOWARDS RELIGIOUS EQUALITY

FROM THE FIRST PROPOSAL TO DISESTABLISH THE IRISH CHURCH TO ITS DISESTABLISHMENT

1856-1869

1. Proposal to Disestablish and Disendow the Irish Church.—This was the next step taken in the direction of securing complete religious liberty. The Irish Establishment had long been considered a public scandal by liberal and fair-minded men; and attempts had already been made to lessen, if not to remedy, the evil. In 1833 an Act was passed, which reduced the number of its bishops from twenty to twelve. In the next year a resolution was moved by Mr. Ward to apply its surplus revenues to secular purposes; but this was defeated, as was also an amendment to the grant for the Roman Catholic College of Maynooth, protesting against endowment by compulsory means of any religious institution (1845). In 1856 Edward Miall (formerly a Congregational minister), who had been elected for Rochdale, brought forward a proposal for the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Irish Church. He had given much time and thought to the consideration of ecclesiastical affairs, and his clear and closely reasoned speech gained him a respectful hearing. But the time had not come for seriously considering the

question ; and, after a brief reply from Lord Palmerston, who was then Premier, the resolution was rejected by 143 to 93 votes.

2. **Advance in other directions.**—But although this question was for the time set aside, progress was made in other ways. When the Triennial Conference of the Liberation Society met in 1859, it was noted with satisfaction that various grants to the colonies for ecclesiastical purposes had been discontinued (the reserves for the clergy in Canada were secularised in 1854), and the “ministers’ money” in Ireland withdrawn ; secular courts, moreover, had been substituted for spiritual courts, for testamentary business and divorce (1857) ; and the burial laws were materially modified. Jews also had just been admitted to Parliament (1858), after considerable opposition on the part of their more timid or less enlightened Christian fellow-countrymen. Progress too had been made towards the opening of the grammar schools and universities to all sections of the community. In 1854 the scholarships and the Degree of B.A. at Oxford were thrown open to Nonconformists ; and in 1856 the B.A. and M.A. Degrees at Cambridge were also made available to them. Under these circumstances, Free Churchmen were encouraged to prosecute more vigorously their crusade against prejudice and privilege. To that end, as well as to express gratitude to the men who had so nobly testified their fidelity to the principles of religious freedom by submitting to loss and suffering on their behalf, they resolved to make a special effort to celebrate—

3. **The Bicentenary of the Ejection of Nonconformist Ministers in 1662.**—Free Churchmen generally en-

tered most heartily into the movement. Separate and united committees were formed; and these made the necessary arrangements for the holding of meetings, preaching of sermons, and the preparation of literature suitable to the occasion. Amongst the writings published were three prize essays by Dr. Angus, Dr. Waddington and Rev. A. Lord; "English Puritanism" by Peter Bayne; "The Ejection of the Episcopalians" by Rev. J. G. Miall; and a "History of English Nonconformity" by Dr. Vaughan.

The agitation was widespread, and was continued for fully six months—to the no small annoyance of many friends in the State Church, who declared that they could see no adequate reason for thus "reviving the bitter memories of old times". In nearly every place, the villages not excepted, the stirring story of the two thousand was brought before the people in various forms; and the interest excited was undoubtedly very great.

Commemoration Day, St. Bartholomew's, was Sunday, August 24, and Free Church ministers in every part of the country preached on the subject. "*The Nonconformist*," three days afterwards, contained reference to three hundred and fifty sermons preached in more than a hundred and fifty towns. "*The Times*," too, and other newspapers did the event full justice. As an immediate result of the commemoration, all classes of Free Churchmen became more deeply attached to their principles, and were confirmed in the determination that by the abolition of all unrighteous and exclusive privileges, these principles should have a fairer opportunity of being carried out.

Subsequently a large *Memorial Hall and Library* was erected in Farringdon Street on the site of the old Fleet Prison, in which the early Nonconformist confessors and martyrs were confined. Its total cost was about

£80,000, which was met almost entirely by contributions from members of the Congregational body. The building forms the headquarters of their Union, and other religious societies, and has since become the centre of a National Federation of Free Churches. The opening ceremony took place in 1875, under the presidency of John Remington Mills, the largest contributor; and was attended by all the leading ministers and laymen of the denomination.

4. Final Struggle for the Abolition of Church Rates.—So determined were Free Churchmen to be relieved of these objectionable charges, that after the defeat of Sir William Clay's motion in 1853, they scarcely allowed a year to pass without making some attempt in Parliament to secure their abolition. In 1859 they pushed their Bill through the Lower House, in spite of the opposition of the leaders of both political parties; but it was defeated in the Lords, which was again the case in the following year. The question remained in abeyance for some years; but in 1861, the Nonconformists, moved by the declaration of Mr. Disraeli and the leaders of the Establishment party that in no case should abolition be granted, held a great meeting in the Freemasons' Hall, and resolved to continue the agitation until the rates were totally extinguished. The Bill was brought in again; but, though it was supported in a powerful speech by John Bright, and had the goodwill of the Liberal leaders, it was lost by the casting vote of the Speaker.

The Bill met with various vicissitudes during the next few years; but, notwithstanding the supineness of the Liberal ministry and the active opposition of the Tories, its supporters kept it always to the fore. They were rewarded for their courage and perseverance in 1868.

Two years previously Mr. Gladstone, who was fast rising to power, had for the first time supported the measure : it was on the understanding, however, that the change should involve only the abolition of the compulsory levying of the rates on unwilling tax-payers, and that in some cases they should continue until the debts contracted on their security could be discharged. This proved to be the form in which the vexatious question was ultimately settled. The measure introduced had a fair passage through the House of Commons, and was not altered for the worse by the Lords. The Act came into force on July 31, 1868, and thus Free Churchmen, by their long-continued efforts, were at length relieved of the necessity of supporting an ecclesiastical system in which they did not believe, and of which they conscientiously disapproved.

5. Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Irish Church.—The question, introduced by Mr. Miall in 1856, was reopened this year by Mr. Gladstone, when the Government of Mr. Disraeli was tottering to its fall. He brought in a series of resolutions to the effect that the Church of Ireland should be disestablished and disendowed. These were carried by considerable majorities ; and afterwards a Bill was passed, arranging for the limited suspension of patronage. This, however, was thrown out by the Lords ; and in July Parliament was dissolved.

The elections in November resulted in a Liberal majority of 121. When Parliament met in the beginning of 1869, no time was lost in bringing forward the Disestablishment Scheme, which was similar in substance to that which had been previously proposed by Mr. Miall, now member for Bradford. After protracted opposition, the Bill passed the House of Commons by a majority of 114, and was duly sent to the Upper House. Their lord-

ships considered it advisable to consent to the second reading; but in committee endeavoured to render it practically useless by a series of hostile amendments. Most of these, however, were rejected in one sitting by the Commons, who were supported by a large body of public opinion.

The Peers again insisted on almost all their amendments, and objected strenuously to the proposal that none of the surplus funds should be devoted to the maintenance of any church or clergy, or for the teaching of religion. But as usual, the struggle between the two Houses was settled by a compromise; the result being that the Irish Establishment (whose property was said to have been confiscated) began a new existence as a Free Church with a capital of £8,000,000 according to the original provisions of the Bill, and an additional sum of £1,000,000 instead of the extra £4,000,000 demanded by the Peers.

6. An unfair Census Proposal.—Whilst the Non-conformists were occupied in assisting to promote these important reforms, they were not unmindful of other interests. In 1860 they were the means of defeating an insidious proposal of Lord Palmerston, to require the people under a penalty to make a declaration of their religious belief in the forthcoming census. This was at the instigation of the clergy, who remembering the returns of the previous decade, and the startling information they afforded of the strength of Nonconformity, wanted now a census of profession and not of fact. But, had the plan been carried out, there is no doubt that many persons would have failed to fill up the papers in the sense required, and that others would have been led to represent themselves as belonging to the Established Church through fear of offending their superiors and those upon

whom they were more or less dependent; whilst others again would probably have done the same thing who were practically of no religion at all, not being in the habit of attending a religious service of any kind. Hence the returns would have been misleading, and probably all the indifferent and irreligious duly claimed as Churchmen. Since that time the Anglicans, while preventing any further census of church attendance, have repeatedly tried to obtain a census of religious profession, but without success.

7. Abolition of Sectarian Qualifications for Public Office.—Although the Test Acts had been abolished, there still remained the offensive requirement, that occupants of public offices should declare their belief in the authenticity and truth of the Scriptures, and promise not to exercise any authority, power or influence, possessed in virtue of their office, against the Church of England. It was thought necessary, therefore, to secure the abolition of this qualification. A Bill for this purpose was accordingly introduced by Mr. G. Hadfield in 1860, which passed through all its stages in the House of Commons. It was, however, thrown out by the Lords; and they adopted the same course for four years in succession. In 1866 they gave way, and the *Qualification for Offices Act* became law. In the following year, a further concession was obtained by the passing of an Act which enabled all persons holding a judicial, civil, or corporate office to attend their own places of worship in the robes or other insignia of their office. The offices of Lord Chancellor of England and Viceroy of Ireland still remain closed to Roman Catholics.

8. Preservation of Bunhill Fields.—In the year

1864 it was feared that this celebrated burying-place of so many illustrious Nonconformists would pass into the possession of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and be let by them for building purposes. A movement was therefore set on foot to avert this probable outrage. The City Corporation was led to take action; and in 1867, as the Commissioners did their utmost to drive a hard bargain in the matter, an Act of Parliament was passed securing the burial-ground in perpetuity to Nonconformists under the guardianship of the Corporation.

9. Religious Activities.—The religious activities of Nonconformists were both manifested in the advancement of their respective denominational aims, and the carrying out of plans for the spiritual welfare of the people. Revivals of religion were promoted; and the movements inaugurated by the publication of the last census returns were carried on with vigour. In the most populous parts, new chapels and halls were erected, and meetings held for the benefit of the working classes. In these endeavours the enthusiasm and munificence of such men as Samuel Morley, Sir Morton Peto, and other wealthy Nonconformists were most helpful and encouraging. It may also be noted that the period from 1860 onward was marked by conspicuous improvements in Free Church architecture, a large number of unsightly and inconvenient meeting-houses being replaced by edifices at once commodious, substantial, and artistic.

In Wales a large number of additional places of worship were built, and a considerable advance was made in education. Improvement was marked also in London, where from 1861 to 1865 the Free Churches spent as much as £800,000 in church extension. Evangelistic services in music halls and theatres were continued; and

an earnest effort to meet the objections of working men to the methods of the religious communities was made, by promoting a series of conferences between their representatives and ministers of various denominations. Whether these meetings had much immediate practical result seems doubtful; but they encouraged more friendly relations between the parties who attended them; and they probably paved the way for better directed efforts to promote the spiritual welfare of the class for which they were held.

10. Charles Haddon Spurgeon.—Whilst the Free Churches were rejoicing in the valuable labours of many eminent and devoted men, whose names are too numerous to mention, there suddenly appeared in their midst a wonderfully eloquent though youthful preacher, who was destined to aid very materially in the expansion of his own denomination and to exercise a potent influence for good over the whole Christian world. Charles Haddon Spurgeon came to London from a pastorate in the small village of Waterbeach in Cambridgeshire in 1853, when he was not yet twenty years of age. He had been invited to the charge of New Park Street Baptist Chapel, Southwark, which was then almost empty. The extraordinary power and charm of his oratory soon filled the place, and rendered an enlargement necessary. Even Exeter Hall, which was taken during the alterations, would hardly hold the crowds that flocked to hear him. It was the same a little later at the Surrey Music Hall, where on one occasion a false alarm of fire was raised amongst the audience of 7000 persons, when seven lost their lives and many more were injured. In the year 1861, the Metropolitan Tabernacle at Newington was erected at a cost of £32,000. It was capable

of seating 5000 people, and was opened free of debt. For over thirty years Spurgeon preached here to crowded audiences and carried on his abundant labours. The Pastor's College for the training of young men for the ministry was commenced in 1856; the Stockwell Orphanage was started on its career of love and pity in 1867; and besides these things, other schemes of practical Christianity were set on foot, which have been the means of accomplishing much good.

11. William and Catherine Booth.—In the early days of Spurgeon's London ministry, God was preparing two other agents in the provinces, who were destined to exercise probably still greater influence than the genial and popular Baptist minister. William Booth, a preacher in the Methodist New Connexion, had married, in 1855, Catherine Mumford, a lady of rare intellectual and spiritual gifts, and much force of character, who was like minded with himself in a burning desire to win souls to the Saviour. Mr. Booth was a born evangelist; and having had remarkable success at revival meetings in different parts of the country, he found it difficult to settle down to prosaic circuit work in a narrow and proscribed sphere, where his natural capabilities could have little scope. He and his wife therefore felt it to be their duty to leave the Connexion, and seek opportunities of usefulness elsewhere. Those opportunities soon came. Their various friends in different parts of the country assisted them to organise evangelistic meetings, which were accompanied with remarkable signs of the Divine favour. In 1865 the evangelists came to London, where they received cordial sympathy and valuable aid from R. C. Morgan, Samuel Morley, Henry Reid, and many other earnest Christian friends. Their principal labours were

in the East End, amongst the most degraded part of the population. Here they began the mission which was to develop by-and-by into the world-wide enterprise of the Salvation Army.

12. Controversies of the Time.—The Free Churches could not but be affected by the interesting questions raised by some of the bishops and clergy of the Established Church. *Dr. Colenso*, Bishop of Natal, published in 1862 a critical treatise on the age and authorship of the Pentateuch, which excited much apprehension and raised a perfect storm of controversy. A little later the "*Essays and Reviews*" appeared. It was the joint production of six influential clergymen, and was said to contravene certain received doctrines of the Church. Both these books occasioned a trial in the Ecclesiastical Courts. Exception was also taken to some of the writings of Professors *Kingsley* and *Maurice*, and great excitement was caused by the publication of *Prof. Seeley's* "*Ecce Homo*," a survey of the life and work of Jesus Christ. A new spirit was coming over the study of the Bible, and the Free Churches were having trouble in connection with the growth of modern theological thought. A painful controversy arose amongst the Congregationalists respecting a volume of hymns by *T. T. Lynch*, one of their ministers, who was violently attacked as Unitarian and Deistical because the hymns were simply devotional and undogmatic. The dispute continued for nearly two years (1855-7), causing much bitterness amongst the brethren, and not a little needless pain and sorrow to the gentle and tender-spirited author. Then differences arose in connection with Lancashire College. *Dr. Davidson* was accused of heresy for asserting that parts of the Bible are fallible, that the imprecatory psalms

are not inspired, and others only partially so, and that believers in pre-Christian ages had only a very faint hope of a future state, etc. After a somewhat acrimonious discussion, both professors, *Dr. Vaughan* and *Dr. Davidson*, deemed it advisable in 1859 to retire from their positions in the college.

Mr. Spurgeon, again, after he had been a year or two at the Tabernacle, raised in the height of his youthful ardour an unpleasant and trying discussion on the question of Baptismal Regeneration. Like Dr. Dale of Birmingham, who had spoken out on the subject during the 1862 celebration two years before, he could not understand the manifest inconsistency of the Evangelical clergy subscribing to the words of the Prayer-book and consenting to the teachings of the Catechism, and yet inculcating, apparently, a totally different doctrine. Plain "John Ploughman" that he was, Spurgeon roundly accused the clerical subscribers of dishonesty. "I impeach," said he, "before the bar of universal Christendom, these men, who knowing that Baptism does not regenerate, yet declare in public that it does." He was taken to task for his impetuous declaration by many persons, including some of his Baptist brethren, but he could not be induced to withdraw it. As time went on, however, and the asperities of the conflict died away, his Evangelical friends in the Establishment, believing that he could not really think them consciously dishonest, gave him as before their full confidence and esteem.

CHAPTER XIII

MORE PROGRESS TOWARDS RELIGIOUS EQUALITY

FROM THE DISESTABLISHMENT OF THE IRISH CHURCH TO THE OPENING OF THE CHURCHYARDS TO NONCONFORMIST BURIALS

1869-1880

1. **Abolition of University Tests.**—Shortly after the Irish Disestablishment Bill had become law, Sir John Coleridge, the Solicitor-General, introduced a measure to abolish the long-standing grievance of restricting the benefits of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge to members of the Established Church. Mr. Dodson had brought the matter forward at the close of the last Parliament, contending that these seats of learning were National Institutions—that the education given in them was general in the widest sense—that they were lay and not spiritual or ecclesiastical corporations—and that therefore they were not indissolubly connected with the “Church”. The same kind of arguments were now used. There was no opposition in the House of Commons; but in the upper House the Peers were in no hurry to countenance the proposal, and Lord Salisbury said that “the abolition of safeguards to religion required careful consideration”. When, in 1871, the measure was again introduced, the same Conservative statesman proposed sundry hostile amendments which were decisively re-

jected by the Commons; and, on the Bill once more appearing for their lordships' consideration, he advised them to discard it altogether. It was, however, carried, and in June received the royal assent. Thus, after a protracted and bitter contest, the emoluments and offices, as well as the degrees were thrown open to all sections of the community. It was not, however, till the year 1882, that the headships of colleges in Oxford and Cambridge were freed from clerical restrictions; and divinity degrees in those institutions are still inaccessible to Nonconformists.

2. Disestablishment in the Colonies.—Meanwhile the cause of Disestablishment was gaining ground in the colonies. In 1863 State aid to religion was abolished in New South Wales; and subsequently the same course was taken by Queensland, Tasmania, and Victoria. Then the other self-governing colonies of the Empire followed suit, and now afford a striking example of the advantage to religious communities, and to the people generally, of freedom from State Patronage and Control.

3. Elementary Education was largely promoted in 1870 by the passage of the celebrated measure introduced by William Edward Forster. Its principal object was to supply the deficiencies of denominational instruction by the creation of School Boards; which should have power to levy an educational rate, erect schools, and supervise the education given in them. But it permitted the denominational schools to receive assistance from the rates without being subject to any popular control; and, as originally introduced, it afforded no protection from unsolicited religious instruction imparted to children of parents of another persuasion; and provided, moreover, no

guarantee that the teaching in the Board Schools should not be made unrighteously distinctive of one denomination.

Free Churchmen of course were up in arms ; and many of them strenuously contended for a system of secular education, leaving the religious instruction of the children to be supplied outside the common school entirely by voluntary effort. This they regarded as the only satisfactory solution of the sectarian difficulty. But Mr. Forster was impatient of criticism ; and the Government, of which he was a member, refusing to give a sympathetic attention to the earnest representations of the Nonconformists (hitherto their most loyal supporters) on various important points, carried their measure by the aid of their Conservative allies. Almost all the dissentients could obtain was the adoption of a Time Table Conscience Clause (since proved to be practically useless), and the exclusion from the Board Schools of Catechisms and Formularies distinctive of any particular denomination. Moreover, as time went on, it became increasingly plain that the Act, passed ostensibly in the interests of the whole community, had secured preponderating advantages to the already powerful and richly endowed State Church.¹ Still, deficient as it was, the Act was a great boon to the people, and marks an era in the history of the country ; and where honestly administered, its shortcomings have proved less disadvantageous than was feared.

4. A Proposal to Disestablish the British Churches was brought forward in 1871 by Mr. E. Miall and seconded

¹ The Established Church then received 73 per cent. of the total sum provided by the State. In 1876 the limit of assistance to Denominational Schools was raised from half the expenditure to 17s. 6d. per head, whether there was any local subscription or not.

by Mr. Henry Richard, a distinguished representative of Welsh Nonconformity. It was not of course expected that so radical a change could be at once, or even speedily effected; but it was thought desirable to place the question before the country, as some preparation for the event which must at some time or other come to pass. An interesting debate ensued, in which the mover and seconder of the motion were complemented by the leaders on both sides of the House, on the moderation and ability with which it was supported; but it was nevertheless rejected by a majority of 285 to 89 votes. The proposition was again brought forward in the two following years; but only to be defeated as before.

5. Jubilee of the Repeal of the Test Acts.—The Parliament elected in 1874 exhibited a Conservative majority, a fact largely due to the abstention of Nonconformists from the polls, because they were dissatisfied with the shortcomings of the Education Act. The Liberation Society, nevertheless, made considerable progress; and the idea of Disestablishment was kept well to the front, and powerfully impressed on the people by such able and eloquent lecturers as Rev. R. W. Dale, LL.D., and Rev. J. G. Rogers, D.D., who attended many large gatherings in different parts of the country for the purpose.

The members of the Society, moreover, joined heartily with other Nonconformists in the proposal to celebrate the Jubilee of the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. On May 9, 1878, the day of the Jubilee, an influential and representative deputation waited on the venerable and aged Lord John Russell, under whose auspices the repeal had been secured, with an address of congratulation; and subsequently, there was a public banquet at the Cannon Street Hotel, at which Lord

Granville presided. This was attended by a large number of Free Church leaders and their political friends, and served in various ways to strengthen and extend the general interest in the cause of Religious Liberty and Equality.

6. Churchyards opened for Nonconformist Burials.

—The clergy had long resisted the proposal to allow Dissenters to bury their dead in the parochial churchyards with funeral services by their own ministers, because they regarded it as an unjust interference with the vested rights of the incumbents. Time after time during twenty years, had a motion to this effect been brought forward; and as often, had it met with vigorous and successful clerical opposition. At length, after the election of 1880, when Mr. Gladstone returned to power with a substantial Liberal majority, a Burials Bill drafted by Lord Selborne and Mr. Osborne Morgan was introduced into the House of Lords. Strange to say, it met with but a feeble resistance, and was actually allowed to pass with only a few alterations. In the Commons it had the powerful support of Mr. John Bright and other Liberal leaders; and, after being improved by the excision of several restrictive amendments, it was agreed to by both Houses, and speedily became law. The measure did not secure all the changes necessary to enable Nonconformists quietly, decently, and peaceably to bury their dead. It did not prevent them from being occasionally subjected to irritating and vexatious interference on the part of the more scrupulous and bigoted amongst the clergy of the Established Church. But no further alterations could then, and for some time afterwards, be secured.

7. Changes in Wesleyan Methodism.—In the

meantime the Free Churches were making progress, and applying themselves energetically to the interests of their respective denominations. That of the original body of Methodists, however, had from various causes been for many years remarkably slow. But the rigidity of the system was relaxing; changes for the better were taking place in the constitution of the Conference, and in other directions; and these probably had already begun to promote the vigorous revival, which has resulted in the present prosperous condition of the Connexion.

The greatest reform was effected in 1877, when laymen were admitted to Conference. Had the step been taken earlier, it would undoubtedly have saved many heart-burnings, and possibly have prevented any disruption. The "Mixed Conference" is now composed of 240 clerical and 240 lay representatives; but the latter are not entitled to vote with ministers on all questions, as certain matters affecting ministerial character and spiritual interests are reserved for their consideration alone, whilst the vote of the "Legal Hundred" is required to give validity to the proceedings of this representative assembly.¹ In the previous year, Parliament had passed "The Methodist Conference Act," by which power was given to confer independence on the various branches of Methodism in the Colonies. This was needful because of the terms on which all the Connexional property is held.

8. Establishment of the Presbyterian Church of England.—Changes and developments were also taking

¹ Conference has just arranged for another advance. The Representative Session is to be composed of 300 ministers and 300 laymen, and is to sit first instead of being, as hitherto, sandwiched in between two Pastoral Sessions, which practically reduced it to comparative impotence.

place in other denominations. During many years attempts had been made to promote corporate union amongst the various sections of the Free Presbyterian Church in Scotland and England: but, as far as the former country was concerned, they had failed. South of the Tweed, however, the negotiations were successful. On June 13th, 1876, the Synods of the Presbyterian and the United Presbyterian Churches met in Liverpool, where at the Philharmonic Hall they joined together as one body, henceforth to be known as the *Presbyterian Church of England*. Its first moderator was *Dr. James Anderson* of Morpeth. Since then, the United Church has continued to maintain constant and steady progress, taking its full share in all the evangelistic, educational and philanthropic movements of the time.

9. Discussions amongst Congregationalists.—The unrest accompanying the advance of modern thought respecting Biblical and kindred questions made itself manifest in the efforts of some ministers to shake themselves free from what they regarded as the shackles of an obsolete system of divinity; and in fears, on the part of others, lest the changing methods of studying and expressing theology should ultimately lead to rationalism and unbelief. The people, too, were somewhat apprehensive lest their spiritual guides should be drawn away from the simplicity and warmth of the saving gospel of Christ into the cold and barren intricacies of a negative philosophy. Amongst the men whose orthodoxy was regarded as doubtful was *Rev. J. Baldwin Brown*, of Brixton, who had published a book on the “*Fatherhood of God*” and other theological works. Later on, however, the brethren gave him their full confidence and elected him to the chair of the Union.

In the year of his chairmanship a matter came up for discussion of no small importance to the members, and Congregationalists generally. In the previous year, 1877, during the autumnal meetings at Leicester, a conference was called by some ministers who were noted for their advanced opinions, at which it was urged "that religious communion is not dependent on agreement in theological, critical or historical belief". This was understood as an insidious attempt, on the part of the promoters, to secure for avowed Unitarians a recognised place in the fellowship of the Congregational Churches. It was accordingly strenuously resisted. The controversy was continued into the next year, and matters came to a crisis at the meeting of the Assembly at Islington Chapel, London, in May. Although Congregationalists are not bound by any strict and formal creed, and ministers have a large amount of latitude both as regards their own private faith and their public teaching, it was not expected that they would make an improper use of the liberty they enjoyed whilst remaining in communion with their brethren. A series of resolutions comprising the principal articles of Congregational belief were therefore proposed and carried. After this the discussion practically ceased, and the excitement gradually died away.

10. Movements in the Established Church.—Meanwhile the controversies in the Anglican Communion were showing no sign of abatement. Some questions were apparently settled, or were in abeyance; but others took their place, and the whole aspect of affairs seemed stormy. Ritualism was exciting great interest and considerable apprehension. A *Public Worship Regulation Bill* for its suppression was brought into the House of Commons, and passed after some discussion. In the

course of the debate *Mr. Henry Richard* rebuked the majority of the House for doing all they could to throw the education of the young into the hands of the Romanising priests, and said in conclusion: "All I desire for the Church of England is, that she should enjoy the same privileges that I myself enjoy, that the fetters by which she is bound to the State be cut asunder, so that she may possess that which the humblest community in the land possesses—freedom to order her own affairs according to her conception of what will most conduce to her edification and is most in harmony with the will of her Divine Master".

Though divided in opinion as to doctrine and ceremonies, the clergy were showing a tendency to union in another direction by meeting in a yearly congress, the first of which was held in 1863. At these assemblies current religious, ecclesiastical and sometimes social questions were discussed; and in most of the large towns Free Churchmen were not backward in promoting friendship and good feeling by offering hospitality to the clergy who attended them.

11. Organisation of the Salvation Army.—The evangelistic work in the East End of London, commenced by *William* and *Catherine Booth*, had in the meantime met with marked success, and began to develop rapidly under their energetic and skilful management. It continued to receive valuable financial and other aid from various sources, and was carried on by an undenominational committee. As, however, the mission extended itself and responsibilities increased, it gradually assumed a different character. Its name was changed from the *East London Mission* to the *Christian Mission*, because its operations were no longer confined to a part or the whole of the

metropolis. Then as it was found necessary to build, and own as well as hire, halls for meetings, a conference was called and a proper deed poll was drawn up and executed in Chancery, which gave the mission a legal title to its property. In January, 1877, finding that the semi-democratic conference committee system, which he had inaugurated did not run smoothly, and was not likely satisfactorily to accomplish the end in view, Mr. Booth established a system of government more closely allied to the autocracy of Wesley; and, with the consent of his fellow-workers, constituted himself its head. The name given to the new organisation was *The Salvation Army*, and it immediately began to assume a martial character. In 1880 it was felt that its operations ought not to be confined to the British Isles, and its world-wide enterprise was commenced by the despatch of officers to America and Australia.

12. Missionary Progress.—Meanwhile the general missionary work of the Free Churches was being actively carried on. Great interest had been created by the publication in 1857 of *Dr. Livingstone's Missionary Travels*, descriptive of his wonderful journey across Africa from Kuruman to St. Paul de Loanda on the west coast, and back again to the Zambesi, and on to Quilimane on the east coast. The interest, moreover, was sustained by his subsequent journeys, his long absence in the interior, the anxious search for the lost explorer, the dramatic meeting between himself and *H. M. Stanley*, his tragic death in Ilala, the bringing of his body to the coast by his faithful followers, and its burial on April 18th, 1874, in Westminster Abbey. All this, and Stanley's after journey down the Lualaba and the Congo to the sea, fixed people's attention on the Dark Continent, and in-

spired God's servants to bestir themselves for the good of its miserable and down-trodden inhabitants. As a result the Congo Mission was established by the Baptists, the Central African Mission by the Congregationalists, the Livingstonia Mission by the Free Church, and the Universities and Uganda Missions by the Church of England.

In other parts of the world also the societies were active. In 1862 the work of the London Missionary Society in Madagascar had been recommenced, and a considerable body of European and native agents were labouring for the good of the people. The missionaries of the same society, located in other parts of the field, were also zealously carrying on their labours and winning fresh triumphs for the Master. Notably was this the case in the South Seas, where the brave native converts, inspired by the love of Christ, nobly seconded their efforts to take the gospel to the savages of New Guinea. It was the same also with the messengers of other societies, whose praise is in all the churches, but whose names are too numerous to mention. In the wilds of Africa, in the beautiful isles of the Southern Ocean, in the heathen cities and villages of India, and amongst the teeming millions of the civilised but miserable inhabitants of the so-called Flowery Land, they ceased not their efforts to bring mankind to the Saviour that they might be blessed with the riches of His grace.

CHAPTER XIV

UNITY IN DIVERSITY.

FROM THE OPENING OF THE CHURCHYARDS TO NONCON- FORMIST BURIALS TO THE UNITED FREE CHURCH DEMONSTRATION

1880-1898

1. **Jubilee of the Congregational Union.**—In the year 1881, the jubilee of the Congregational Union was celebrated in a very hearty and effective manner. Some great meetings were held, especially in London and Manchester; and these were addressed by leaders of the denomination at home, and distinguished brethren from abroad. At the meeting held in Manchester some 1600 delegates were present, and *Drs. Dexter, Storrs, Magoun* and *Hopkins* from America, and *Dr. Pressensé* from Paris, and *Dr. Griffith John* from China took part in the proceedings. A Jubilee Fund was then opened, and before being closed it realised the large sum of £434,470.

2. **Free Church University Movement.**—Partly from the impetus received at these meetings, and with the object of providing for the sons of Congregationalists that University training which had hitherto been denied them, it was decided to establish a College at Oxford. Accordingly “Springhill College” was transferred from Birmingham to that seat of learning, and after the
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necessary changes had been made, converted into *Mansfield College* under the direction of *Professor A. Fairbairn, LL.D.* This important undertaking was brought to a successful issue chiefly through the energy and perseverance of *Dr. R. W. Dale* of Birmingham and *Dr. Simon* of Springhill, and the hearty co-operation and splendid munificence of never-failing friends amongst the laity.

The college was inaugurated by public services and meetings on October 14th, 1889, and the two following days, and from the beginning, has proved a marked success. Some of its students have greatly distinguished themselves, and have obtained well-merited university honours. It continues, moreover, to give to Nonconformists a most excellent education; and has had, it is said, a perceptible influence on the theological training of the Church of England. In this movement the Congregationalists followed the lead of the Unitarians in the establishment of Manchester College, Oxford; and their own example is being imitated by the English Presbyterians, who are transferring their Bloomsbury College to Cambridge.

3. Episcopal proposals for Corporate Reunion with Nonconformists.—Although the Established Church clergy continued to be divided on questions of doctrine, and prosecutions for Ritualistic practices (with very unsatisfactory results) were frequent, a desire was expressed to enter into brotherly conference with the representatives of other Christian communions in the English-speaking races to consider the subject of possible corporate reunion. This was suggested at the second pan-Anglican conference held in 1886 at Lambeth Palace. The basis for consideration was acceptance of Holy Scripture as the rule and ultimate standard of faith, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Sacraments of

Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administrations to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of the Church.

The proposal was accompanied by a fraternal and courteous letter, sent by the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Congregational and Baptist Unions, the Wesleyan Conference, and the English Presbyterian Church. In each case, however, the answer was substantially the same. It was felt that whilst the bishops were evidently sincere in the overtures they made, the unity they desired was not a joining together of the various denominations into one new organisation, but an absorption into their own; and for the Dissenters to acknowledge the Historic Episcopate was to give up their whole case. The well-meant scheme therefore came to nothing, as had been the case with all previous attempts at comprehension.

4. **The Revision of the Bible**, carried on for fifteen years by a Committee of State Church and Free Church scholars, was a better illustration of what was practicable in the shape of Christian unity. The proposal was submitted to Convocation in 1870 by *Dr. Wilberforce*, Bishop of Winchester, and *Dr. Ellicott*, Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol. It was favourably received, and committees were appointed to carry on the work with the aid of scholars belonging to other denominations, there being two companies of American revisers subsequently added. In all ninety-nine scholars were engaged in the task, of whom no less than fifty did not belong to the Episcopalian Church. It was completed in 1885, and a large edition was then brought out by the presses of Oxford and Cambridge Universities, which had already granted £20,000 towards the expenses of revision, the

scholars employed, moreover, giving their services gratuitously. This revision, upon which so much willing labour and conscientious care were bestowed, has proved of great value; and, in spite of a few pedantic renderings in familiar passages, has steadily grown in public favour.

5. The Close of Mr. Spurgeon's Career.—The jubilee of this distinguished preacher was celebrated in 1884, by a series of public services in the Tabernacle, which were largely attended, not only by his own people, but by numbers of well-known representatives of other denominations. On this occasion he was presented with the handsome sum of £4500 (afterwards increased to £5000) as some recognition of his worth. But, as was the case with the money (£6000) presented to him in 1875, on the occasion of his silver wedding, he devoted it to the service of his Master.

A year or two after this event, the pastor of the Tabernacle began in his magazine, the "*Sword and Trowel*," what was known as the "Down Grade Crusade". He was alarmed at the rationalistic tendencies of the age, and the popularity of the new theology amongst many ministers of the Baptist denomination. Time after time, therefore, he uttered a warning note about progress downwards, to end, he feared, in practical infidelity; and in 1887, finding his warnings unheeded, he took the extreme step of retiring from the Baptist Union. This occasioned much surprise and sorrow on the part of many of his friends, especially those who did not share his gloomy forebodings. Much discussion ensued, and some bitterness was manifested. But at length, the Union having adopted a declaration which partially met Mr. Spurgeon's views, he maintained towards it a more friendly attitude, though he never again formally declared himself a member.

It was not long afterwards that he became a martyr to gout and rheumatism, which obliged him to winter in the south of France. His last long and painful illness called forth universal Christian sympathy. He was released from his sufferings on 31st January, 1892, and was followed to the grave by a great concourse of people. Besides his pastoral and benevolent work, he found time to write a number of useful books; the most popular of which perhaps are "*John Ploughman's Talk*," and "*The Treasury of David*," a commentary on the Psalms in seven volumes. His sermons, moreover, which began to be published weekly in 1855, are still being issued.

6. Death of Mrs. Booth.—A short time before, the sympathies of the religious world were drawn out by the illness and sufferings of *Catherine Booth*. This extraordinary woman had been a true helpmeet to her husband and a tower of strength to the Salvation Army. She had a wonderful gift of speech, and a marvellous power of influencing for good the large audiences, so often gathered to listen to her weighty words of wisdom, truth and love. Moreover, she had endeared herself by many tender, gracious ways to the thousands of people who were associated with her in Christian work, and who looked up to her for guidance and help. But the time came when they could no longer benefit by her active ministrations. She was struck down by an incurable and painful disease, and for nearly two years calmly and patiently awaited her release. During the whole of that terrible period, she was assisting to her utmost her fellow-workers—receiving deputations, sending messages from her bedside, and constantly praying for their success. Many times she rallied when she was not expected to live, and thus revived hopes which were doomed to disap-

pointment. At length on October 4th, 1890, the end came, a triumphant departure to the better world. Her remains were removed from Clacton to the Congress Hall, Clapton. There during several days, some 40,000 people passed in procession to view the coffin. Then on October 13th, it was transferred to the Olympia Skating Rink, where a monster funeral service was held. Thence, on the following day, it was borne through the city; followed by a large multitude to Abney Park Cemetery, and committed to the grave, over which stands a stone on which are the words, "To the mother of the Salvation Army".

7. The Centenary of Wesley's Death was celebrated in 1891 with great solemnity, not only in Great Britain, but also in other parts of the world. To Methodists the remarkable series of services, held for a whole week in City Road Chapel, will ever be memorable. Nor did they alone honour their noble leader and recognise the immense value and importance of his work. *Canon Farrar*, when he addressed one of these gatherings undoubtedly voiced the general sentiment of Protestant Christianity when he said: "I say that even now I do not think we have done sufficient honour to the work which Wesley did. Consider the fact that he gave an impulse to all missionary exertion—the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Religious Tract Society, the London Missionary Society. Even the Church Missionary Society owes much to his initiative. The work of education and the work of Ragged Schools, the work of Robert Raikes the Gloucester printer, and John Pounds the Portsmouth cobbler were partly anticipated when the saintly Silas Todd taught at the Foundry. Wesley was the first to encourage the cheap press with all its stupendous results; he was the first to make common in England the spread

of religious education ; he was the pioneer of funeral reform. He was the inaugurator of prison reform, for he visited prisons, and sought to improve them long before John Howard made that his special work ; and the very last letter he ever wrote was a letter written to Wilberforce to spur him on and encourage him in his brilliant advocacy of Emancipation for the slaves. We may therefore feelingly endorse the estimate of one, who said that almost everything in the religious history of modern days was foreshadowed by Wesley."

Dean Stanley had already in 1876 permitted a tablet in memory of the two brothers to adorn the walls of Westminster Abbey ; and in connection with the Centenary, a statue of John Wesley was placed in front of City Road Chapel. Could the great evangelist and religious leader himself have been present at the Centenary Celebrations, and been conscious of the unique position of Methodism in the Christian World to-day, he would have been lost in grateful admiration at the wonderful way God had used him for the accomplishment of His own gracious purposes ; and would probably have shouted aloud what he had whispered on his dying bed : "I'll praise, I'll praise".

8. Efforts to disestablish the Welsh and Scotch Churches.—After the Irish Church had been disestablished, British Free Churchmen turned their attention to those of Wales and Scotland. The former received the larger amount of consideration, because the anomaly of the State Church in a Nonconformist country was greater, and the case for disestablishment seemed more urgent. Several motions made before 1891 received a considerable amount of support, and the one introduced in that year had the assistance of Mr. Gladstone. Two years after-

wards the Liberal statesman carried his Suspensory Bill, as a preparatory measure, as in the case of the Irish Church. In 1894 the Disestablishment measure was accepted by the House of Commons, after protracted opposition, and sent up to the Lords; but it was emphatically rejected on the advice of the Marquis of Salisbury and the bishops. In the following year the measure was again brought forward and practically passed by the Commons; when the defeat of the Government necessitated an election which resulted in the return of its opponents by a large majority.

The cause of Scottish Disestablishment also made some progress during the same period. In 1885 Sir Charles Cameron's motion to that effect was rejected by 112 votes. Three years later the adverse majority was less than half. Again in 1890 when Mr. Gladstone lent his aid, it fell to 38. In 1893 the matter was still further advanced by the introduction of a Disestablishment Bill, which passed its first reading by a majority of 66 in a House of 425 members. It was again brought forward in 1894, since which time however little or nothing has been done, on account of the strength of Tory reaction.

9. Aid to Denominational Schools.—The Education Act of 1870, whilst giving great dissatisfaction to Non-conformists as being too favourable to the Established Church, was not altogether agreeable to the Anglican clergy; and their displeasure increased as the people's schools, erected under its provisions, multiplied and prospered. It was found that the clerically managed and insufficiently supported denominational schools could not successfully compete with those under the control of Boards, and in receipt of assistance from the rates;

although the grant paid by the Government to both was equal. The Denominationalists therefore, notwithstanding the fact that they were still unwilling to accept popular control, chafed under what they called the "intolerable strain" of competition, and resolved to do their utmost to remove it.

It was largely by the vigorous efforts of the clergy, who had also been greatly alarmed at the passage of the Welsh Disestablishment Bill through the House of Commons, that the Liberal party suffered so severe a defeat in the election following.¹ Accordingly, one of the first things the Conservative Government did, after the opening of Parliament in 1896, was to bring in a Bill for the relief of Denominational Schools. The measure was introduced by *Sir John Gorst* on May 5th; but it was so unfair to the people's rate-aided schools, and so manifestly intended to exalt the clerical schools at their expense—making provision in some cases for the extinction of the former—that it provoked prolonged opposition from the members of the much-diminished Opposition; and on June 22nd it was unexpectedly withdrawn.

In the following year, 1897, however, *Mr. Balfour* took charge of an amended Bill, which the Government was de-

¹ Several causes contributed to this reverse. Much was due to the beating of the "drum ecclesiastic"; but probably more to the political organisation of persons interested in the Trade in Strong Drink, which the Government had proposed to subject to some degree of popular control. This proposal, and the alarm it excited, were proofs of the strength attained by the *Temperance Movement* during an advocacy of two generations. The movement was always unsectarian; and among its leaders have been numbered State-Churchmen, Free-Churchmen, and Roman Catholics. Still, it is undeniable that on the whole the strongest, most active, and most thoroughgoing of the Temperance Societies have found their leaders in the Evangelical Free Churches.

terminated to carry through. Some of the most objectionable clauses of the former measure, such as the establishment of local authorities to superintend and control education, and provide for the gradual extinction of Board Schools, were omitted. But from a public and non-sectarian point of view it was objectionable enough, inasmuch as it proposed to pay an additional sum of five shillings for each child learning in a "voluntary" school (and a few necessitous Board Schools), without any guarantee that the money thus granted should be expended in a proper manner, or that the "voluntary" contributions should be continued.

The proposal involved the continuance and aggravation of the injustice from which the Nonconformists were suffering in being obliged, in some 8000 parishes of England and Wales, to send their children to schools where their principles are sedulously set at nought; and it was, moreover, manifestly unjust to the people generally, inasmuch as in many districts it handed over to those who were unwilling to tax themselves for the benefit of the children large sums of money, while to those who were willing to bear the burdens of taxation for their sakes it gave scarcely anything or absolutely nothing. In spite, however, of determined opposition and earnest entreaty, the Government by the aid of its large majority, and assisted by the Irish Roman Catholic members (who ungraciously disregarded their deep debt of gratitude to the Protestant Dissenters for many self-sacrificing efforts on their behalf), forced the measure through the House without accepting any amendment whatever. It passed the third reading by 331 to 131 votes, and was speedily confirmed by the Lords.

Since the Act has come into operation, it has not afforded to its clerical promoters all the satisfaction they

expected, and they are beginning to clamour for still more favourable treatment ; but on the other hand, Free Churchmen are deeply moved by a sense of the injustice to which they are being subjected, and now that the question has been reopened, are resolved that it shall not be again closed until the children of all denominations obtain equal rights and enjoy equal privileges.

10. Free Church Federation.—Whilst all attempts at corporate union with the Established Church had failed, different sections of the Methodists and Presbyterians had united with one another, and a fraternal feeling amongst the Nonconformists was growing and developing. They had not only acted in concert for the protection of their own interests, and the advancement of Free Church principles, but had met together occasionally in representative public meetings for the promotion of harmony and mutual goodwill. A notable instance of this occurred in 1886 when the Baptist and Congregational Unions held a joint assembly in the City Temple.

But these too infrequent gatherings were felt to be altogether insufficient for the promotion of inter-denominational goodfellowship and practical Christian unity. Organic union there could not be as long as the minds of men are so dissimilar, and the character and amount of their knowledge so varied ; but there was no reason why there should not be *Unity in Diversity*—a union which would allow full play for individual and denominational differences, and yet secure harmony, energy, and strength for the carrying out of common aims and purposes.

The idea of Federation was accordingly suggested and discussed by some of the leaders of Nonconformity ; and at a meeting of representatives from various denomina-

tions, held in Manchester, it was agreed to send out invitations for a first Congress in that city in 1892. This Congress duly met; and at a second, held in Leeds the following year, the *Revs. T. Law* and *J. M. G. Owen* were appointed joint secretaries to organise Councils throughout the country. The movement spread; and at the Birmingham Congress in 1895, under the presidency of the late Dr. Charles Berry, 130 local Councils were reported. The next Congress, held at Nottingham the year after, became the *First National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches*; when a definite constitution was adopted, and it was decided to open offices in London and to invite Mr. Law to devote the whole of his time to the work of organisation. At the last Congress recently held in Liverpool nearly 600 Local Councils were represented.

The objects of the Federation are: (1) to facilitate fraternal intercourse and co-operation amongst Evangelical Free Churches; (2) to assist in the organisation of Local Councils; (3) to encourage devotional fellowship and mutual counsel concerning the Spiritual Life and Religious Activities of the Free Churches; (4) to advocate the New Testament doctrine of the Church and to defend the rights of the associated churches; (5) to promote the application of the law of Christ in every relation of human life.

In the promotion of these aims, the Federation has been actively engaged, and considerable success has attended its labours: numerous fraternal gatherings have been arranged; local differences adjusted, and jealousies and suspicions lessened, if not entirely removed; whilst by united efforts for the common good, the social, moral, and spiritual work of Christianity has been more effectively carried on. Moreover, the public interests of Nonconformists have been watched over and cared for

more satisfactorily and thoroughly than before, and Free Church principles sedulously propagated amongst the community.

Besides holding many public meetings for the advocacy of its cause, the Federation has undertaken a monthly magazine, "*The Free Churchman*"; has issued the "*Free Church Handbook*" and other publications; and has produced, perhaps, the most remarkable result of the movement: "*The Evangelical Free Church Catechism*". After being originally drafted by *Dr. Oswald Dykes*, the book was examined and revised by an enlarged committee of the eight principal denominations, and published in January last with their joint approval. In connection with the Federation, a most remarkable gathering took place in the City Temple on 1st December, 1898. It was under the presidency of *Dr. John Clifford* and was addressed by the presidents of all the twelve denominations represented. It was truly described as "a great historical event," and, in one aspect at least, "the most magnificent meeting held in Europe during the last three centuries".

In the spring of the present year (April 25th), the Federation promoted the celebration of the tercentenary of the birth of Oliver Cromwell, the advocate, upholder, and friend of Religious Liberty.

CHAPTER XV

FREE CHURCH PROGRESS

“BY THEIR FRUITS YE SHALL KNOW THEM”

1. **Numerical Increase.**—It has been already seen, by the census of places of worship and attendance thereat, taken in 1851, that, in spite of early persecution, and many subsequent adverse circumstances (such as material and social disabilities), the number of Nonconformists had largely increased. Since then the increase has been well maintained, and in not a few cases, has gone on at a more rapid rate.

The present numerical position of the British Free Churches may be seen from the following statistics, taken from the figures published in the “*Free Church Handbook*,” and also from returns kindly furnished by the officials of various denominations.

These statistics, though not altogether complete, may be regarded as substantially accurate, and they represent the vast majority of Nonconformists in Church fellowship. The other religious communities outside the pale of the Establishment (with the exception of the Salvation Army, and perhaps the Plymouth Brethren, the statistics of whose forces are somewhat difficult to obtain) are in reality but few in number and small in size.¹

¹ See the remarks in the Appendix on the misleading enumeration of obscure and erratic sects.

Denominations.	Ministers in Active Service.	Local Preachers.	Members.	Sunday School Teachers.	Sunday School Scholars.
ENGLAND AND WALES.					
Baptists	1815	4,385	336,518	49,618	525,533
Congregationalists	2404	5,479	415,072	59,548	676,216
Presbyterians	310	...	71,444	7,566	81,923
Calvinistic Methodists (or Welsh Presbyterians)	780	413	151,882	25,120	176,192
Wesleyan Methodists, including Scotland	1783	17,427	541,880	130,093	961,024
Primitive Methodists	952	15,841	184,954	57,828	436,906
United Methodist Free Churches	341	3,020	80,086	24,118	191,484
Methodist New Connexion	190	1,115	35,448	10,877	80,831
Bible Christian Methodists	165	1,485	28,883	7,265	41,521
Independent Methodists . . . . .	...	391	8,705	2,829	25,831
Wesleyan Reform Union ¹	16	414	7,182	2,717	20,734
Society of Friends . . . . .	...	...	16,554	1,289	42,961
Churches of Christ . . . . .	...	...	11,688	1,345	12,772
Moravians . . . . .	...	...	3,321	570	4,435
Countess of Huntingdon's Con- nexion	30	...	2,258	370	3,100
Free Church of England	16	...	1,300	...	3,500
SCOTLAND.					
Baptists	110	169	16,034	1,609	13,554
Congregationalists	180	9	25,600	610	4,844
Free Church	1144	117	293,684	18,165	219,757
United Presbyterians	631	72	197,476	11,883	106,200
Reformed Presbyterian Church	9	...	1,176	...	...
United Original Secession	29	...	3,837	...	...
IRELAND.					
Wesleyan Methodists	242	575	27,955	2,734	24,557
Baptists	26	109	2,666	204	1,990
Congregationalists	32	40	2,150	75	345
Presbyterian Church	656	87	106,424	10,250	105,046
Reformed Presbyterian Church ¹	33	...	4,085	...	...
Secession Church ¹	10	...	1,230	...	...
Totals	11,901	51,148	2,579,492	426,683	3,761,256

The lay, or local preachers, are most numerous amongst

¹ These are minorities of the bodies so called, which retained their independence when the majorities amalgamated with the larger communities.

the Methodist communities. These preach occasionally in the towns; but their work lies chiefly in the villages, or in connection with missions to the working classes. The Sunday School teachers are, of course, all voluntary and unpaid helpers, whose self-sacrificing labours amongst the children are productive of untold blessing to the Church and the world.

2. Missionary Labour Abroad.—The general results of the work of the Free Churches in heathen lands, during the century that has elapsed since its commencement, may be seen from the following table compiled from the reports of 1898:—¹

Societies.	Missionaries—Male and Female.	Native Helpers.	Members.	Pupils under Instruction.	Income raised in Great Britain.
Baptist Missionary Societies .	253	8,609	53,465	38,483	£98,583
Free Church of Scotland .	307	1,221	10,624	36,361	65,486
Friends' Missionary Societies .	82	464	15,283	16,691	44,487
London Missionary Society (mainly Congregational) .	261	4,336	49,915	52,715	111,491
Methodist New Connexion .	15	79	2,123	464	4,105
Presbyterian Church of England .	55	153	5,466	62	24,855
Presbyterian Church of Ireland .	49	307	1,462	5,613	19,380
Primitive Methodists .	17	10	1,256	...	6,811
United Methodist Free Church .	25	295	8,651	...	9,840
United Presbyterian .	133	801	23,404	39,000	41,868
Welsh Calvinistic Methodist .	11	770	3,231	11,106	9,368
Wesleyan Methodist .	224	9,094	44,734	103,206	117,824
Totals	1432	26,139	219,614	303,701	554,098

The above figures do not represent the whole of the results of Free Church Missionary enterprise. There are no statistics of Moravian Missions, the Salvation Army,

¹ See Almanac of Missions published by the American Board of Missions.

Medical Missions, and various other agencies which can be suitably inserted in the above table; whilst those of all undenominational societies, as the China Inland Mission, in which Nonconformists take a warm interest, are necessarily omitted. The statistics given, however, present a remarkable indication of what has been accomplished through the instrumentality of the Free Churches.

Large numbers have been gathered into the Christian Church; numbers more are its acknowledged adherents; and all these with their children have become more or less the subjects of a mental and moral, physical and social change of an entirely beneficent character. In some parts, as in Africa, Madagascar, and Polynesia, men have been redeemed from the wretchedness of heathen barbarism to the blessedness of Christian civilisation; whilst in countries such as India and China, where so many millions of ignorant and deluded idolaters live, the missionaries have brought multitudes out of darkness, sin and misery, into the sunlight of purity and happiness; and their teaching, moreover, has permeated society with truths and principles, which must ultimately undermine and destroy all the abominations of idolatry, and bring in Jehovah's reign of justice, goodness and peace.

3. Christian Work at home.—Besides contributing to Foreign Missions, encouraging Evangelistic Work in town and country, and lending support and assistance to the Sunday School, the Free Churches are each the centre of a variety of efforts for the common good. Like all true Churches, whether bound to the State or freed from it, they seek to justify their existence, not only by the maintenance and enjoyment of their special privileges, but by Christlike service for the benefit of others. This service often consists in a Guild or Endeavour Society

for the elevation of Christian character ; a Temperance Society, and a Band of Hope for the promotion of Sobriety ; a Penny Bank for the encouragement of Thrift ; Literary, Mutual Improvement, and Musical Societies to edify and divert young men and maidens ; Dorcas and Maternity Societies for special cases of distress ; systematic visitation of the poor and needy, and care for their spiritual and physical necessities. These different efforts may be small in themselves, and their effects upon the locality in which they are made scarcely perceptible ; yet the sum total of their results is immense, and is without doubt an infinite blessing to the land.

4. **Christian Settlements.**—The Free Churches are also engaging heartily in the new application of an old idea, known under the name of *Social Settlements* ; the distinguishing feature of which is personal service amongst the poor. This movement is the result mainly of the preaching and teaching of distinguished ministers and writers, who have insisted persistently on the necessity for Christian people not only to give, but to do, and to show by their willingness to live and labour in the midst of the working classes, that they are brothers and sisters indeed. “The idea common to all Settlements is that persons of various callings and standards should in some measure share a common life—that rich and poor, educated and uneducated, cultured and uncultured, should meet and know and help each other.” Although promoted and maintained by various religious communities, these settlements are usually worked on undenominational lines, sectarian interests being kept subservient to public ends. The oldest and probably the most successful is Toynbee Hall, under the care of Rev. Canon S. A. Barnett, M.A. ; and here a considerable number of

agencies are carried on for the physical, educational, moral, and religious welfare of the masses.

The settlements in which the Nonconformists are more particularly interested, are Mansfield House, Browning Hall, and Bermondsey. The first named is associated with Mansfield College, and was practically founded by its students. "The distinguishing feature of this settlement," says Mr. Reason,¹ "is not so much any one line of activity as an all-round occupation with the different aspects of the life of the poor, social, economic, educational and religious. Its members have taken a great share in the public life of West Ham, on the Town Council, School Board, and Board of Guardians. It originated the "Poor Man's Lawyer"; whilst its lodging-house for working men is unique amongst settlements. It is Congregational in origin and association, but in practice is unsectarian." The warden is Mr. Percy Alden, M.A. With it is connected the Woman's Settlement of Canning Town, of which Miss Cheetham is superintendent. Browning Hall is under the wardenship of the Rev. Herbert Stead, M.A.

The Bermondsey Settlement was established under the auspices of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference. The work is many-sided, university extension and other educational effort receiving a great deal of attention. The warden, the Rev. J. S. Lidgett, M.A., is a guardian of the poor and a member of the London School Board. Much assistance is also given to the other institutions for helpfulness in the district. Connected with this also there is a Woman's Settlement, which is presided over by Miss Simmonds.

¹ " *University and Social Settlements*," by Rev. W. Reason, M.A., p. 180.

5. **The Social Work of the Salvation Army** commenced by William and Catherine Booth, and since the death of the latter conducted by the General alone, has always been characterised by true Christian philanthropy. Their sad experiences amongst the debased and miserable inhabitants of East London taught them that it was almost useless trying to save the souls of these poor people, whilst the necessities of their bodies were crying aloud for help; so they and their friends began, even then, to try and meet the want. But, as time went on, their mightiest efforts to stem the flowing tide of destitution, misery, and sin seemed to be of comparatively little avail; and Mr. Booth published, in the year of his devoted wife's death, the book in which they were both interested, and on which their brightest hopes were set, "*Darkest England and the way out*".

The production created a profound impression, and as far as its immediate object was concerned, secured a signal and speedy success. All classes were moved, and contributions towards promoting the scheme began to pour in. The sign the General wanted was given; the "dew on the fleece" descended, and more than the £100,000 asked for was provided. Then commenced the work of using it to the best advantage for attaining the end in view. Want of space forbids attempting an adequate description of what has been accomplished, and of what is still being done; details are out of the question, and even a summary cannot be given. Whilst all that was hoped for has not been attained; yet, in the words of *Sir Walter Besant*, it is perfectly true that "The great social experiment — the greatest ever attempted — has been actually carried into practice, and has proved actually successful". There cannot be the slightest doubt, whatever may be thought and said of some of the

religious methods of the Salvation Army, that the Divine Father has blessed abundantly such Christlike works as the Slum, the Police Court, and the Prison Gate Missions; the Night Shelters, the Home for Street Arabs, the Rescue Homes and Maternity Hospital; the City Industrial Factories, and the Farm Colony at Hadleigh. Of these efforts it will surely be said to those engaged: "Because ye did it unto these, ye did it also unto Me".

6. Present Duty and Future Prospects.—Happily a better spirit in relation to Nonconformity now prevails amongst the bishops and clergy of the Established Church. But the same principles, which led to injustice and bitterness in the past, are still held by many of the Episcopalian ecclesiastics of the present; and it must never be forgotten that whatever rights and privileges the Nonconformists now enjoy, have been secured as the result of much suffering, and of long-continued and determined conflict. And the battle is not yet over. It is still too often a case of "proud superiority on the one part and painful disability on the other. There are some who are conscious they are privileged, and others who are conscious they are wronged." While this state of things lasts there cannot be real union, true brotherhood, and lasting peace between the different sections of Christ's Church in this land.

Free Churchmen, therefore, must continue to strive for the removal of the last vestiges of religious disability, and the possession of equal rights with those who are at present associated with the State: and they must do so the more readily and earnestly, not merely for their own sakes, but for the sake of the Episcopalians themselves; who, freed from the shackles that bind them, and the

corrupting and enervating influence of their connection with the secular Government, may then be expected to renew their strength, to deepen their spirituality, to extend their influence, and to take unfeigned delight in joining with their humbler brethren in every work of charity and pity the Master bids them do.

In the meantime, Free Churchmen (who are signalling their entrance upon a new era by the creation of magnificent Twentieth Century Funds) can make use of their Federation, not only or even mainly for the defence of their common interests, but rather to enable them to draw closer to one another in Christian fellowship, to stimulate and encourage emulation in good works, and by mutual forbearance and brotherly love, as well as by the exercise of sound common sense, to remove or lessen those causes of friction which do so much to promote disunion and impede the progress of God's kingdom of unity, purity, and peace.

APPENDIX

ON THE NUMBER AND CHARACTER OF NONCONFORMIST SECTS

BY THE REV. T. G. CRIPPEN.

VIGOROUS efforts have been made to discredit Free Church Principles, by insisting on the multiplicity of sects—said to amount to several hundreds—whose places of worship had been certified to the registrar-general. It is therefore worth while to point out that the far greater number of these denominations fall into a few well-defined classes: (1) Alternative names, variously descriptive or merely local, of the same community, including nicknames; (2) Subdivisions occasioned by some small or transient disagreement, not involving permanent breach of fellowship; (3) Names, often designedly vague, of unsectarian meetings, or missions in which two or more Churches co-operate; (4) Foreign religious bodies, of which a few have a small English following; (5) A residuum of exclusive and erratic sects, some represented by single congregations, some not Christian at all, and all of them numerically and morally insignificant.

The census of 1851 reported 20,390 congregations, in England and Wales, not connected with the Established Church; grouped under thirty-seven Denominations, including subdivisions, together with 539 “isolated congregations”. But of the last named, nearly three-fourths prove on close examination to be either alternative names, or united or unsectarian missions. In short, the aggregate of non-established congregations may be classified as follows: (1) Evangelical Free Churches *now* represented in the National Federation—*i.e.*, Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, Methodists, Moravians, and Friends, 18,665; (2) Roman Catholics and other Foreign Christian Churches, 586; (3) Sandemanians, Irvingites, Swedenborgians, Plymouth Brethren, Unitarians, Mormons, and Jews, together 837; (4) Missions, Unsectarian and Undefined, 155; (5) *Twenty-nine* Erratic and Nondescript Sects, 147. *In short*, 91½ *per*

cent. of the Nonconforming Congregations of 1851 might be described as "Evangelical Free Churches"; and there is no reason to think that the present proportion is appreciably different.

We proceed to give a brief account of the various minor sects that have appeared in England since the Reformation.

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

The Controversialists of this age enumerate a vast number of so-called "heresies"; but apart from the Anglicans, Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, Quakers, and Roman Catholics, the only organised sects were the following, all of which are extinct:—

FAMILISTS, or FAMILY OF LOVE: A secret society with an elaborate sacerdotal hierarchy. They originated in Holland, and first appeared in England about 1575. Their writings are difficult to understand, and they were accused of many strange notions and practices. They seem to have held that religious opinions and modes of worship are indifferent, if the soul be filled with love; and to have combined Antinomian theories with an ascetic manner of life.

SEEKERS: They supposed that all existing Churches had lost the Apostolic order and ministry; and therefore reduced their religious observances to a prayerful seeking for its restoration, or for some new revelation of the divine will.

RANTERS: A pantheistic sect, who claimed absolute personal union with God. They decried Scripture, and boasted that they were "above all commandments, because God was in them". They were often immoral in their lives; and were probably a remnant of the mediæval "Brethren of the Free Spirit".

MUGGLETONIANS: Followers of John Reeve and Ludovick Muggleton, who about 1650 gave themselves out as "the last and greatest prophets of Jesus Christ". They taught that God had a human form; and that men were of two races, the divine seed and the seed of the serpent. They are charged with claiming power to save or damn men at their pleasure.

LEVELLERS and FIFTH-MONARCHY MEN were political rather than religious sects. Ecclesiastically they were Independents. The former sought to establish Communism on a scriptural basis; the latter were fanatical Millenarians, who would own no ruler but Christ, expecting that His dominion would soon supersede all earthly magistracy.

NONJURORS: Eight bishops, and about 400 clergymen, with

their followers, who at the Revolution refused the oaths of allegiance to King William III. They developed extreme "High Church" principles and practices; and only ceased to exist as a sect when the Stuart family became extinct.

PHILADELPHIAN SOCIETY: Followers of Jane Leadley, an enthusiast who saw visions, and adopted the theosophy of the German mystic Jacob Boehme.

SEVENTH-DAY BAPTISTS: A small sect who regarded Saturday as the divinely ordained Sabbath. [A very small remnant of this party still survives.]

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

The Moravians (see p. 99) are a community of German origin. The great revival of this century gave birth to the Methodists—Wesleyan and Calvinistic—with their various subdivisions (see pp. 97, 138), and the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion (p. 112). During this century there were several secessions from the Presbyterian Church of Scotland (see p. 157), in which no question of doctrine was involved. In England many old Presbyterian and Baptist congregations became first Arian, and afterwards Unitarian (see p. 123).

FRENCH PROPHETS: The persecution of Protestants, and afterwards of Jansenists, in France led to an outburst of fanaticism which found expression in convulsions, and prophecies of the impending destruction of Church and State. Several of these enthusiasts came to England about 1706, and gained a considerable temporary following.

SHAKERS: About 1747 some of the "French Prophets" formed the nucleus of a small pietistic society in Lancashire; of whom, subsequently, one Ann Lee became the leader. Their constitution was communistic and celibate; they practised dancing as a religious exercise, but cultivated a strict morality. Ultimately they emigrated to America, where they gained adherents, and are still a thriving community.

SANDEMANIANS, or GLASITES (see p. 157).

DALEITES: A petty Scottish sect, differing from the Sandemanians only on some points of discipline.

INGHAMITES: A small Calvinistic body that arose about 1760. They laid great stress on the imputation of Christ's active righteousness to believers. Their discipline was borrowed from the Moravians.

JOHNSONIANS: A small and exclusive Baptist sect, which arose about 1770, and held peculiar notions about sin, grace, faith, etc.

BEREANS: Another small sect, about 1773, who affirmed that faith is neither a duty nor an intellectual act, but a special gift of God, and that no knowledge of Him is possible except from Revelation.

BUCHANITES: A handful of enthusiasts, about 1783. They affirmed that sin does not adhere to believers, renounced marriage, and looked for a bodily translation to heaven at the daily-expected coming of Christ.

SWEDENBORGIANS, or NEW JERUSALEM CHURCH (see p. 160).

HUNTINGTONIANS: Followers of William Huntington, an illiterate but eloquent preacher, who taught supralapsarian Calvinism and Antinomianism. They usually call themselves "Calvinists".

SOUTHCOTIANS: Disciples of Joanna Southcote, an illiterate peasant, who in 1791 set up as a prophetess. She claimed to be the "Woman clothed with the Sun" of Rev. xii., Bride of the Lamb, and predestined Mother of Shiloh. A section of her followers long survived under the name of "Christian Israelites".

HALDANITES: A name given to several congregations which arose in Scotland, as a result of the Evangelistic tours of the Messrs. Haldane. They ultimately united with the Scottish Baptists and Independents.

JUMPERS, SWADLERS, and CANORUM were merely nicknames for Methodists.

Of the above sects, the Swedenborgians are still a numerous body; the Sandemanians, Inghamites, Johnsonians, and Huntingtonians are represented by dwindling remnants; the rest are extinct.

NINETEENTH CENTURY.

UNIVERSALISTS: The first English preacher who openly taught Universal Restoration was Jeremy White, chaplain to Cromwell. An American sect of Universalists arose about 1780, and their opinions are adopted by most Unitarians. In 1851 there were two congregations of Universalists, *not* Unitarians, in England.

WALKERITES, or SEPARATISTS, hold the Sandemanian theory of faith, *i.e.*, that it is merely intellectual assent; affirm that "all good is from God," in such wise that whatever is of man is evil; repudiate all ecclesiastical offices; and deem it sinful to hold religious fellowship with any outside their own circle.

PLYMOUTH BRETHREN (see p. 160).

IRVINGITES, or CATHOLIC APOSTOLIC CHURCH (see p. 160).

MORISONIANS, or EVANGELICAL UNION (see p. 158).

RANTERS (2) was merely a nickname for Primitive Methodists.

PECULIAR PEOPLE: A fellowship of pious but illiterate persons, which sprung up about 1845. They are chiefly distinguished by insistence on a childishly literal interpretation of the English Bible, and by conscientious refusal to seek medical aid in sickness.

OLD SECEDERS, or AULD LIGHTS: When the United Presbyterian Church was formed, in 1847, by amalgamation of the "Associate" and "Relief" Synods, a few congregations stood aloof; and still claim to be the "Original Secession".

MORMONS, or LATTER DAY SAINTS: The followers of the American impostor, Joseph Smith of Nanvoo, made energetic attempts to gain proselytes in England; and in 1851 had as many as 220 congregations. Their number has since greatly diminished.

An impostor and pseudo-prophet named WROE formed a short-lived sect in Yorkshire.

The following sects have appeared since the census of 1851:—

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST, also called CAMPBELLITES: Evangelical Baptists, who disapprove of a paid ministry, and have some peculiarities of discipline of American origin.

FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, and REFORMED EPISCOPAL CHURCH (see p. 162).

SALVATION ARMY (see p. 187).

CHRISTADELPHIANS and ADVENTISTS: American Millenarian sects: the former, among many strange notions, hold that the soul and body die and are raised together; the latter expect the immediate coming of our Lord, and observe the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath.

CHRISTIAN SCIENTISTS: Another small American sect, who have peculiar metaphysical notions, especially as to the mental cause and cure of bodily disease.

SHAKERS (2): A small communistic sect, which existed for a few years under the leadership of a Mrs. Girling.

JEZREELITES, or NEW AND LATTER HOUSE OF ISRAEL: Another small communistic sect, directed by an impostor who assumed the name of "Jezreel," and professed to be entrusted with "God's last message to mankind". They scarcely survived their leader.

PRINCITES, or CHURCH OF THE SON OF MAN: Apparently an offshoot from the German mystical coterie known as the Mucker of

Königsberg. Their leader, "Brother Prince," first founded a pietistic society called the *Lampeter Brethren*, and afterwards a communistic institution called the *Agapemone*, or *Abode of Love*. Latterly he is said to have professed to be an Incarnation of the Third person of the Trinity! Their tenets are obscure, but seem to include a Gnostic-dualistic view of religion and nature, which is applied to sexual relations. Like most unpopular sects, they were accused of immoral practices; and it is suspicious that, when the charge was publicly formulated by a man of literary eminence, they took no steps to repel it.

Spiritualists, Freethinkers, Teetotalers, and "Recreative Religionists," who have at various times registered places for worship, have no claim to be regarded as Christian sects; while "The Theistic Church," Theosophists, Positivists, and Secularists distinctly repudiate Christianity.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE . . . . .	219

A. D.

- 410. All Britain south of the Tees nominally Christian.
- 449. First recorded settlement of the English.
- 472. First evidence of *Diocesan* Episcopacy in Britain.
- 580. Heathen English dominant everywhere east of the Severn.
- 597. Augustine's arrival in Kent.
- 635. Scottish and Irish missionaries (Aidan and Fursey) in Northumberland and East Anglia.
- 655. Scottish missionaries in Mercia.
- 664. Synod of Whitby—Romish usages adopted by the Church of England.
- 669. Theodore selected by the Pope as Archbishop of Canterbury.
- 777. Romish usages general throughout Wales.
- 926. Old Cornish Church merged in the Church of England.
- 981. First interference of an English bishop in Wales.
- 1143. Annexation of the last Welsh diocese to the Church of England.
- 1164. Constitutions of Clarendon.
- 1203. Welsh princes appealed to the Pope against English ecclesiastical supremacy.
- 1208. England under a Papal Interdict.
- 1213. King John became the Pope's vassal.
- 1256. The Pope claimed "Annates" or first-fruits from the English clergy.
- 1265. The Commons first represented in Parliament.
- 1279. Statute of Mortmain, to check bequests of land to the Church.
- 1320. Birth of Wickliffe.
- 1351. First Statute of Provisors—against Papal patronage.
- 1353. First Statute of Præmunire—against Papal jurisdiction.
- 1366. Wickliffe defended refusal of subsidy to Rome.
- 1374. Wickliffe sent to Bruges to protest against Papal "Provisions".
- 1376. Institution of the "Poor Priests".

A.D.

- 1377. Wickliffe summoned to trial for heresy.
- 1380. Wickliffe's translation of the New Testament published.
- 1381. Rising of the peasants under Wat Tyler.
- 1382. Courtenay's Statute against heretics : the "Poor Priests" suppressed.
- 1384. Death of Wickliffe.
- 1395. Petition of Lollards for Church Reform.
- 1401. Statute for burning heretics : Wm. Sawtree, martyr.
- 1414-8. Council of Constance : martyrdom of Huss and Jerome of Prague.
- 1417. Martyrdom of Oldcastle (Lord Cobham), the Lollard.
- 1425. Act of Scottish Parliament against heretics and Lollards.
- 1428. Wickliffe's bones exhumed and burnt.
- 1457. Bp. Pecock deposed for protesting against persecution of Lollards.
- 1476. First book printed in England.
- 1516. Erasmus first published the New Testament in Greek.
- 1517. Luther commenced the Reformation.
- 1519. Seven martyrs at Coventry.
- 1521. Henry VIII. wrote against Luther.
- 1522. Baptist congregation at Hill-Cliffe, Cheshire (tradition of).
- 1524. Tyndale driven into exile.
- 1525. Lutheran books forbidden in Scotland.
- 1526. Tyndale's New Testament published.
- 1527. Henry VIII. first sought dissolution of his marriage with Catherine.
- 1531. Convocation compelled to accept Royal Supremacy.
- 1532. Appeals to Rome forbidden by Statute.
- 1533. Marriage of Henry and Catherine dissolved.
- 1534. Papal jurisdiction repudiated by Statute ; and the king declared "Supreme Head of the Church of England".
- 1535. Coverdale's Bible published.
- „ Ten Baptists put to death.
- „ Fisher and More beheaded for denying the Royal Supremacy.
- 1536. Smaller monasteries suppressed.
- „ Martyrdom of Tyndale.
- 1537. Last remains of Papal authority repudiated.
- 1538. Bible set up in churches.
- 1539. Remaining monasteries suppressed.

A.D.

- 1539. Statute of the Six Articles.
- 1542. Bible required to be read in English in church services.
- 1543. English Litany published for use in churches.
- 1546. Martyrdom of Anne Askew.
- „ Conversion of John Knox.
- 1547. Accession of Edward VI.
- „ Acts against Lollards repealed.
- 1548. First English Prayer-book authorised.
- „ Foreign Reformers invited to England.
- 1549. First Act of Uniformity.
- 1550. Joan Boucher, Anabaptist, burnt.
- „ Baptist Church at Eythorn, Kent (tradition of).
- „ Formation of “Church of the Strangers,” London.
- 1551. Bp. Hooper imprisoned for refusing the vestments.
- 1552. Second English Prayer-book authorised.
- „ Second Act of Uniformity.
- „ George von Paris, Anabaptist, burnt.
- 1553. Forty-two Articles of Religion published.
- „ Accession of Queen Mary.
- 1554. Re-establishment of Papal authority.
- 1555. Dissensions among English Refugees at Frankfort.
- 1555-8. Persecution of Protestants ; 286 persons burnt.
- 1557. First National Covenant in Scotland.
- 1558. Accession of Queen Elizabeth ; return of the exiles.
- 1559. English Liturgy revised.
- „ Royal Supremacy reasserted.
- „ Third Act of Uniformity.
- 1560. Presbyterianism established in Scotland.
- 1563. Thirty-eight articles ratified. Many Puritan clergy resigned their benefices.
- 1566. Declaration made by Separatists.
- „ First Nonconformist meeting-house built, at Horningsham, Wilts.
- 1567. Richard Fitz and his congregation imprisoned.
- 1568. A Congregational Church organised in Bridewell Prison.
- „ First Brownist Church formed at Norwich.
- 1571. The Thirty-eight (now Thirty-nine) Articles finally revised.
- 1572. The “Admonitions” published.
- „ First Presbyterian Church in London.

A.D.

- 1572. Knox died.
- 1575. Two Dutch Baptists burnt in Smithfield.
- 1577. Abp. Grindal suspended for encouraging religious conferences.
- 1581. James VI. of Scotland subscribed the National Covenant.
- „ Robert Brown conformed.
- „ Act imposing a year's imprisonment for saying or hearing Mass.
- 1583. Copping and Thacker hanged.
- 1584. High Commission Court made permanent.
- 1587. Penry's supplication for preaching the Gospel in Wales.
- „ First "Martin Marprelate" tracts published.
- 1588. Udall's "Demonstration of Discipline".
- 1590. James VI. again avowed his adherence to Presbyterianism.
- 1592. Udall died in prison.
- „ Penry joined the Separatists.
- 1593. Statutes against Papists and Nonconformists.
- „ Martyrdom of Barrow, Greenwood, and Penry.
- „ First Conventicle Act passed.
- „ London Separatists fled to Holland.
- 1595. The Lambeth Articles.
- 1602. Independent Church organised at Gainsborough.
- 1603. Accession of James VI. as James I. of England.
- „ The Millenary Petition for Church Reform.
- 1604. The Hampton Court Conference.
- „ Canons Ecclesiastical published.
- 1605. Gunpowder Plot.
- 1606. Nonconformists forbidden to emigrate.
- 1608. Pilgrim Fathers escaped to Holland.
- 1611. Authorised version of the Bible published.
- 1612. Leggat and Wightman, Arians, burnt.
- „ John Smyth, "the Sebaptist," died.
- 1618. "*Book of Sports*" published.
- 1619. Synod of Dort, which declared Arminianism to be heretical.
- 1620. Pilgrim Fathers sailed for America.
- 1625. Accession of Charles I.
- 1628. The Petition of Right.
- „ Cromwell first sat in Parliament.
- „ Parliament resolves itself into a Committee of Religion.

A.D.

- 1629-30. Emigration of Puritans to Massachusetts.
1630. Strafford and Laud, Charles' chief advisers.
 „ Dr. Leighton branded and whipped.
1633. Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury.
 „ Republication of the “*Book of Sports*”.
 „ First Particular Baptist Church in England.
1637. Prynne, Burton, and Bastwick pilloried and mutilated.
 „ Puritans restrained from emigrating.
 „ Attempt to enforce the Prayer-book in Scotland.
1638. The Scottish National Covenant solemnly renewed.
1639. Episcopacy abolished in Scotland.
 „ The Bishops' War.
 „ First Dissenting church in Wales, at Llanvaches.
1640. Supplementary canons, imposing the “et-cetera oath,”
 enacted by convocation.
 „ Meeting of the Long Parliament.
 „ Nonconformists began to worship in public.
1641. Courts of High Commission and Star Chamber abolished.
 „ Episcopacy suspended.
 „ First Baptist Church in Wales.
1642. Civil War commenced.
 „ Episcopacy formally abolished.
1643. Westminster Assembly of Divines.
 „ Solemn League and Covenant.
1644. Protest of the Independents in the Westminster Assembly.
1645. Archbishop Laud beheaded.
 „ Book of Common Prayer abolished; Directory substituted.
1647. George Fox (Quaker) began to preach.
1649. Execution of Charles I. Commonwealth proclaimed.
1651. Charles II. crowned at Scone, after subscribing the Covenant.
 „
1653. Long Parliament dissolved. Cromwell Protector.
1654. The “Triers” appointed: commission for scandalous ministers.
1655. Cromwell's intervention on behalf of the Waldenses.
1656. Cromwell refused the crown.
1658. Death of Cromwell.
 „ The Savoy Declaration.
1660. Declaration of Breda.

A.D.

1660. Restoration of Charles II.
 „ Episcopacy re-established.
 „ Bunyan's first imprisonment.
1661. Savoy Conference.
 „ Proclamation against Conventicles.
 „ Corporation Act.
1662. Act of Uniformity : 2000 Nonconforming Clergy ejected.
 „ Episcopacy re-established in Scotland, and Presbyterian Church Courts forbidden.
1664. Persecution of Presbyterians in Scotland.
 „ Conventicle Act, to suppress Nonconformist Meetings.
1665. Five Mile Act, to expel Nonconformist ministers from corporate towns.
1666. Pentland Rising of Scottish Covenanters.
 „ Act of Uniformity for Ireland.
1667. Milton's "*Paradise Lost*" published.
1668. Abortive attempt at Comprehension.
1670. Conventicle Act extended.
 „ Trial of Penn and Mead for preaching.
 „ Holding Field-Conventicles in Scotland declared a capital offence.
1672. First Declaration of Indulgence.
 „ Ancient Merchants' Lecture originated.
1673. Test Act, to exclude Nonconformists and Papists from public offices.
1675. Bunyan's last imprisonment.
1676. Barclay's "*Apology*" for the Quakers.
1678. The "*Pilgrim's Progress*" first published.
1679. Sharp's Act, declaring attendance at Field-Conventicles treason.
 „ Archbishop Sharp killed.
 „ Rising of the Covenanters—battles at Drumclog and Bothwell Bridge.
1680. Cameron slain at Airdsmoss.
1681. United Societies of Covenanters.
1684. Covenanters' apologetical declaration.
 „ The Wigtown martyrs.
1685. Accession of James II.
 „ Monmouth's Rebellion.

- A.D.
1685. The Bloody Assize.
 „ Trial of R. Baxter.
1686. Chapels Royal opened for Romish worship.
1687. Second Declaration of Indulgence.
1688. Renwick, the last Scottish martyr.
 „ Trial of the Seven Bishops.
 „ The Revolution.
1689. Accession of William III. and Mary II.
 „ Bill of Rights and Toleration Act.
 „ Failure of last attempt at comprehension.
 „ Secession of the Nonjurors.
1690. Presbyterianism re-established in Scotland.
1691. Agreement of Presbyterians and Independents in London.
 „ George Fox died.
1692. The Neonomian Controversy.
1694. Two non-juring bishops, Hickes and Wagstaffe, consecrated.
1696. Academy instituted by the “Congregational Fund Board,” afterwards Homerton College.
 „ Quakers permitted to affirm.
1698. Rd. Frankland, tutor of the first Nonconformist academy, died.
1702. Accession of Queen Anne.
 „ First Occasional Conformity Bill.
 „ Defoe’s “*Shortest Way with Dissenters*”.
1703. John Wesley born.
1707. Watt’s Hymns published.
1708. United Societies of Cameronians organised as the Reformed Presbyterian Church.
1710. Lady Hewley died.
 „ Trial of Dr. Sacheverell.
 „ Church in Danger riots; many meeting-houses wrecked.
 „ Ancient Brownist Church at Amsterdam united with the English Reformed Church.
1711. Occasional Conformity Act.
1712. Patronage reimposed on the Church of Scotland.
 „ Dispute in Convocation about the validity of Lay Baptism.
1714. Schism Act—to suppress Nonconformist academies.
 „ Accession of George I.

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1716. Law to protect Nonconformist worship against mob violence.
 1717. Baptist Fund established.
 „ Bp. Hoadley's sermon on the kingdom of God censured by Convocation; which in consequence was silenced till 1850.
 1719. Death of the last surviving ejected ministers.
 „ Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts repealed.
 „ Arian Controversy.
 „ Salter's Hall Synod.
 „ Presbyterian College, Carmarthen, founded.
 1720. Baptist College, Bristol, commenced.
 1723. Board of Baptist ministers formed.
 „ The *Regium Donum* originated.
 1725. Howel Harris began preaching in Wales.
 1727. The "Three Denominations" organised.
 „ John Glas began to promulgate his opinions in Scotland.
 1728. First Annual Act of Indemnity, relieving Dissenters from penalties incurred under the Test Act.
 1729. Dr. Williams' Library opened to the public.
 „ The Holy Club at Oxford.
 1732. Committee of Dissenting Deputies formed.
 1733. The Associate Presbytery formed—the first secession from the Church of Scotland.
 „ Widow's Fund of the Three Denominations.
 1735. Ordination of D. Rowlands of Llangeitho.
 „ J. and C. Wesley sailed for America.
 1736. Geo. Whitefield began to preach.
 „ Bp. Butler's "*Analogy of Religion*" published.
 „ First meeting of the Dissenting Deputies.
 1737. Moravian Church organised in London.
 1738. Dr. Doddridge's Academy—afterwards Coward College—founded.
 1739. Whitefield and Wesley commenced open-air preaching.
 „ First Methodist Societies in London and Bristol.
 „ Kingswood School commenced.
 1742. Methodist classes first organised.
 „ Wm. Seward murdered by a mob while preaching at Hay.
 1743. First Association of Welsh Calvinistic Methodists.
 „ Anti-Methodist riots at Wednesbury.

A.D.

- 1743. Swedenborg began to see visions.
- 1744. First Wesleyan Conference.
- 1747. First Methodist Society in Ireland.
- „ Division of Scottish Seceders into Burghers and Anti-burghers.
- 1748-54. Illegal fines imposed on London Dissenters for refusing the office of sheriff.
- 1751. First Methodist preaching in Scotland.
- 1752. Western College (now at Plymouth) commenced at Ottery.
- 1755. Methodist Conference resolved not to separate from the Established Church.
- 1756. Yorkshire College (now at Bradford) founded at Heckmondwike.
- 1757. Brecon College founded—originally at Abergavenny.
- 1758. Orphan Working School founded.
- 1761. Relief Presbytery formed—the second secession from the Church of Scotland.
- 1762. First Glassite or Sandemanian congregation in England.
- 1766. Methodism established in America.
- 1767. Fines extorted from Dissenters by Corporation of London finally declared illegal.
- 1768. Six Methodist students expelled from Oxford University.
- „ Countess of Huntingdon's College founded at Trevecca (now at Cheshunt).
- 1770. Geo. Whitefield died.
- „ A “Minute” of Wesley's occasioned a violent Calvinistic Controversy.
- „ General Baptist New Connexion formed.
- 1772. Swedenborg died.
- 1778. Grove House, afterwards Highbury College, founded.
- 1779. Methodist Hymn-book published.
- „ Friends' School at Aekworth opened.
- „ Nonconformists relieved from Subscription to the Doctrinal Articles of the Church of England.
- 1780. Relief afforded to Romanists.
- 1781. Raikes' first Sunday School at Gloucester.
- 1783. Countess of Huntingdon seceded from the Established Church.
- 1784. Wesleyan Conference legally constituted by Deed of Declaration.

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1784. Wesley ordained Coke, Whatcoat, and Vasey for ministry in America.
1785. Sunday School Society formed.
1787. Swedenborgian "New Jerusalem" Church organised.
- „ Anti-Slavery Society formed.
- 1787-90. Unsuccessful attempts to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts.
1789. Wesley ordained Moore and Rankin for ministry in England.
- „ Wesleyan Missionary Committee formed.
1791. J. Wesley and the Countess of Huntingdon died.
- „ Further relief afforded to Romanists.
1792. Baptist Missionary Society founded.
1793. Elective franchise restored to Roman Catholics.
1795. Wesleyan Plan of Pacification *virtually* sanctioned separation from the Established Church.
- „ London Missionary Society founded.
1796. Lancastrian schools commenced.
1797. Methodist New Connexion organised.
- „ Midland Baptist College founded (now at Nottingham).
1798. Haldane's preaching tour in Scotland.
1799. Religious Tract Society founded.
1800. First Wesleyan preaching in Wales.
- „ Church Missionary Society founded.
1802. Persons in "Holy Orders" excluded from the House of Commons.
1803. Sunday School Union established.
- „ Hackney College founded.
- „ Two soldiers flogged at Gibraltar for attending Methodist meetings.
1804. British and Foreign Bible Society founded.
- „ Bradford (now Rawdon) Baptist College founded.
1805. The last bishop of the Nonjurors died.
1807. House of Lords rejected a bill for parochial schools.
- „ Abergavenny Baptist College, afterwards Pontypool, now Cardiff, founded.
1808. British and Foreign School Society established.
- „ Slave trade abolished.
1810. Primitive Methodist Society originated.
- „ Independent Methodists originated.

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- 1810. Stepney (now Regent's Park) Baptist College founded.
 - 1811. Formation of "National Society for educating the poor in the Principles of the Church of England".
 - „ Regular missions to the heathen commenced by Wesleyan Methodists.
 - „ Lord Sidmouth's attempt to restrict liberty of preaching defeated.
 - „ First ordination of Calvinistic Methodist ministers in Wales.
 - 1812. Toleration Act amended.
 - 1813. Unitarian Relief Act.
 - „ Baptist Union formed.
 - „ Right of missionaries to preach in India formally conceded.
 - 1816. General Baptist Missionary Society organised.
 - „ Lancashire Independent College (now Manchester) founded at Blackburn.
 - 1817. Wesleyan Missionary Society organised.
 - 1818. Parliamentary grant of £1,000,000 for church building.
 - 1819. Home Missionary Society founded.
 - „ Bible Christians originated.
 - 1820. First National Education Bill introduced and withdrawn.
 - 1824. John Smith, missionary in Demerara, died in prison.
 - 1827. University College, London, founded.
 - „ Unitarian Marriage Act.
 - 1828. Test and Corporation Acts repealed.
 - „ Secession of "Protestant Methodists".
 - 1829. Roman Catholic emancipation.
 - „ Royal Commission to inquire into Lady Hewley's Charity.
 - 1830. Plymouth Brethrenism originated by John Nelson Darby.
 - „ Trial of Ed. Irving for heresy; origin of the Catholic Apostolic Church.
 - 1831. Congregational Union originated.
 - 1832. First Reform Bill passed.
 - „ Irish bishoprics reduced.
 - „ Mr. Pease (Quaker) permitted to sit in the House of Commons on affirmation.
 - „ Oxford Tractarian Movement, commencement of.
 - 1834. First Wesleyan Theological Institution opened, at Hoxton.
 - „ First Bill for admitting Dissenters to the Universities rejected by the House of Lords.

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1834. Commencement of the "Intrusion Controversy" in Scotland.
 „ First motion in Parliament to abolish Church rates.
 „ Arrangements made for abolishing slavery in British colonies.
 „ Wesleyan Association originated.
1835. Tercenary of the Reformation.
 „ London City Mission commenced.
 „ Marriages within forbidden degrees declared void.
1836. Dissenters' Marriage and Registration Acts.
 „ Tithe Commutation Act.
 „ London University incorporated.
 „ Wesleyan Association Secession, in which the Protestant Methodists were incorporated.
 „ Church Rate Abolition Society formed.
1837. Anti-Church-rate Bill carried in the House of Commons.
1838. Spring Hill College, Birmingham, founded: now merged in Mansfield College, Oxford.
 „ Sevenoaks School for Daughters of Missionaries founded.
 „ Slavery finally abolished.
1839. Committee of Council on Education appointed.
 „ Haverfordwest Baptist College (now Aberystwith) founded.
1842. Blackheath School for Sons of Missionaries founded.
 „ Didsbury Wesleyan College opened.
 „ English Presbyterian Synod completed.
 „ Trevecca Calvinistic College founded.
 „ Judgment in suit respecting Lady Hewley's Charity.
1843. Richmond Wesleyan College founded.
 „ Bala (now Bangor) Independent College founded.
 „ Sir John Graham's Factory Bill.
 „ Congregational Board of Education formed.
 „ Evangelical Union of Scotland constituted.
 „ Disruption of Church of Scotland, and organisation of Free Church.
1844. Dissenters' Chapels Act.
 „ Young Men's Christian Association founded.
 „ Liberation Society founded.
 „ Free Church of England originated.
 „ Reedham Orphan Asylum founded.

A.D.

1844. Presbyterian College, London (now "Westminster," Cambridge), founded.
 „ Free Church of England originated.
1845. Maynooth Roman Catholic College endowed by the State.
 „ J. H. Newman seceded to the Church of Rome.
1846. Evangelical Alliance founded.
1847. Taunton Independent College opened.
 „ Shebbear Bible Christian College founded.
 „ Scottish United Presbyterian Church constituted by amalgamation of Secession and Relief Churches.
 „ Westminster Wesleyan Training College opened.
1848. Baptist W. Noel seceded from the Church of England.
1849. "Fly Sheets" agitation in the Wesleyan Societies.
1850. Wesleyan Reform Association formed.
 „ Rev. James Shore imprisoned for preaching in a Nonconformist Church.
1851. Religious census in England and Wales.
 „ New College, Hampstead, constituted by amalgamation of Homerton, Coward and Highbury Colleges.
1852. *Regium Donum* in England discontinued.
1853. Decision in the Braintree Church Rate Case, after thirteen years' litigation.
1854. Clergy Reserves in Canada secularised.
 „ Degrees at Oxford made accessible to Nonconformists.
1856. Degrees at Cambridge made accessible to Nonconformists.
 „ Pastor's College, Newington, established.
 „ First proposal to disestablish and disendow the Irish Church.
1857. Methodist Free Church constituted by union of the Associated and Wesleyan Reform Societies.
 „ Ecclesiastical jurisdiction in matrimonial and testamentary cases abolished.
1858. Jewish disabilities removed.
1860. Grammar Schools opened to Dissenters.
1861. Nottingham Congregational Institute founded.
1862. Bicentenary of ejection of Nonconformist ministers celebrated.
 „ Llangollen (now Bangor) Baptist College founded.
1863. State aid to religion ceased in New South Wales.
 „ First Episcopal Church Congress.

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1864. Ranmoor (Sheffield) Methodist New Connexion College founded.
- „ First Convocation of Free Episcopal Church of England.
- „ Elmfield Primitive Methodist College founded.
1865. Commencement of Mr. and Mrs. Booth's mission in London, which developed into the Salvation Army.
1866. Bury (now Manchester) Baptist College founded.
- „ Sectarian qualification for public office abolished.
1867. Bunhill Fields Burying Ground secured.
- „ Stockwell Orphanage founded.
1868. Sunderland (now Manchester) Primitive Methodist College founded.
- „ Bishops Stortford Nonconformist Grammar School established.
- „ Headingly Wesleyan College opened.
- „ Compulsory Church Rates abolished.
- „ State aid to religion in West Indies discontinued.
1869. Episcopal Church in Ireland disestablished.
- „ Endowed Schools Act.
- „ Mill Hill Grammar School, founded in 1807, reconstituted.
1870. Elementary Education Act.
- „ State aid to religion in Victoria discontinued.
- „ Revised version of Scriptures commenced.
- „ Reformed Presbyterians united with Free Church of Scotland.
- „ Southlands Wesleyan Training College opened.
1871. Motion in Parliament to disestablish the British Churches.
- „ Universities tests abolished.
1874. Public Worship Regulation Act.
- „ Ley's School, Cambridge, opened.
1875. Memorial Hall (Congregational) opened.
- „ Woodhouse Grove Wesleyan School opened.
1876. Presbyterian Church of England organised.
- „ Ashville United Methodist Free Church College founded.
1877. Lay Representatives admitted to the Wesleyan Conference.
- „ Salvation Army organised.
- „ Leicester Conference of Congregationalists.
1878. Handsworth Wesleyan College opened.

- A.D.
1878. Bourne Primitive Methodist College founded.
1880. Churchyards opened for Nonconformist funeral services.
 „ Salvation Army commenced foreign work.
1881. Revised version of New Testament published.
 „ Jubilee of the Congregational Union.
1882. Headships of colleges in ancient universities freed from clerical restriction.
1885. Proposal to disestablish the Church in Scotland.
 „ Revised version of the Scriptures completed.
1888. Episcopal proposals for Corporate Reunion.
1889. Manchester Unitarian College, founded in 1786, removed to Oxford. Present buildings opened in 1893.
 „ Mansfield College, Oxford, inaugurated.
1890. Mrs. Booth died.
 „ Darkest England scheme of Salvation Army initiated.
1891. Calvinistic Methodist Theological College, Bala, opened.
 „ General and Particular Baptists amalgamated.
 „ Free Education Act.
 „ Law of Mortmain relaxed.
 „ Centenary of Wesley's death.
1892. C. H. Spurgeon died.
 „ First Conference of Free Church Council.
1893. Welsh Suspensory Bill carried in the Commons.
1894. Welsh Disestablishment Bill rejected by the Lords.
1896. National Council of Evangelical Free Churches permanently organised.
 „ Congregational and Evangelical Unions of Scotland amalgamated.
 „ Bill to facilitate dissolution of School Boards withdrawn.
1897. Act for relief of "Voluntary" Schools.
1898. Act for dispensing with presence of Registrar at Nonconformist marriages.
1899. Tercentenary of Cromwell's birth celebrated in London and the provinces.
 „ Increased power given to laymen in Wesleyan Conference.
 „ Westminster Presbyterian College (Cambridge) opened.



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